

Final Fantasy/ Altered Tale

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Summary: A tale of Final Fantasy 8 but put into a reality of chivalry and knighthood. Please review.

1. Default Chapter Title

> <meta name="Generator"> Enter the world of an alternate Final Fantasy 8

Enter the world of an alternate Final Fantasy 8. In this fanfic things are not as they would seem. Instead, the time period is the same yet the reality is different. In this world, our characters are knights, wizards and whatnot. The story is also full of ancient magic enhanced technology instead of plain old mechanics. In short, this fic could be viewed as medieval in nature.

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FINAL FANTASY/ ALTERED TALE

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Squall Lionheart Shut his eyes tightly against the glaring light of the lanterns above. His leather gloves rubbed his temples meticulously as his vision adjusted to the new environment.

"Ah, your awake I see." Came the voice of the cleric Kadowaki.

Squall ignored her statement and proceeded to push himself off the medical bed.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you Sir Lionheart. You've suffered quite a wound. It would be a pity for you to reopen it now."

Squall said nothing but sat back on his bed closing his eyes once more. He fingered the fresh wound he had received not too long ago. His eyes snapped open when he realized the traces of the wound were still there.

"Cleric, what is the meaning of this? My wound! It still exists!"

Kadowaki regarded him with thoughtful eyes before responding to his question. "It's an interesting case, that wound of yours. When applying healing herbs and spells, the wound still would not seal completely, leaving a scar behind. That is a rare oddity. There is legend that, if one is injured yet the injury does not heal fully then that person is destined with an important future."

Squall simply scoffed at the revelation and closed his eyes again, signaling that he would hear no more of her story.

"It is just a myth, mind you. But some say it has never failed to become true. Cheer up Sir Lionheart. Perhaps it means that you will find happiness with a wife." The cleric chuckled at her joke but Squall made no move, showing that he had either ignored her, or simply didn't care.

"Always the cold one aren't you? Well your Battalion Leader is on her way to greet you so you might as well be ready when she gets here." That said, Kadowaki left the medical room to attend to duties elsewhere.

"Important futureâ€¦" Squall mumbled to himself, now alone in the room to ponder his thoughts in peace.

Just then, the door creaked open and in walked Battalion Commander Quistis Trepe.

"Greetings Sir Lionheart. I trust that you are well, given the circumstances?"

Squall sat up and gave a salute to his commanding officer but made no response to her question.

"Well then, may I ask what you were thinking when you and Sir Almas took it upon yourselves to face off in a blood match? The two of you nearly killed one another."

Squall glared at her for a minute. He didn't like when others accused him of something so heinous as the act of trying to kill one's own teammate. "Leave that up to Seifer." He replied simply, then got off the bed.

Quistis nodded knowingly at this. "That Seifer is a wild one is he not. I wonder how he ever made it amongst us as a knight anyway."

Squall said nothing but motioned his hand out towards the door, signaling that they should be leaving now.

Quistis took the hint and stepped out of the door. "Look Squall, I realize you and Seifer hold the same position as knights of Garden however I can assure you that you will never have to deal with him and his vile antics after our next sortie. The Supreme Commander of Garden has assured me that he is short of men in his officer programs and he is looking forward to this next battle with all alacrity. He tells me that he is looking for men who will prove themselves on the battlefield. They are to be rewarded with a ranking."

Squall shot her an annoyed glance. "What does that have to do with me?"

"Do not take me for a fool, Sir Lionheart. You and I both know that, you and Sir Almasy are amongst the 12 eligible knights for the rank of Lieutenant. That is why the 12 of you were specifically assigned to this next mission. And I'm sure we both know that Seifer will never gain rank in the knighthood."

Squall gave no answer but continued to walk until they got to the bridge connecting the medical wing to the rest of the Balamb Garden Castle.

You were always the odd one were you not, Sir Lionheart. You should open up a little. Show people your emotions once and a while. Otherwise, you will only be pushing them away."

"Whatever" Came Squall's curt reply only to be mimicked by Quistis at the same time.

She chuckled to herself softly. "It seems I am beginning to understand my subordinate, better."

Squall scoffed and began to walk down the bridge. "I'm a lot more complex than what you think, Commander."

"Do you really think so? I would beg to differ Sir Knight. However, how you think and what you think are your own business right? I will leave it up to you to decide how you wish to deal with what others may think of you. I will say one thing however; others opinions of you may turn for the better if you ever decide to open up once in a while."

Squall grimaced in a gesture of annoyance. "Whatever."

Quistis beamed. "Yes Squall, whatever. Whatever you wish to make of it." And with that, His Commanding Officer finished her trek down the bridge and made a sharp right turn leaving her subordinate alone to ponder his thoughts once again.

Squall continued down the bridge, still lost in deep contemplation of his destiny. 'Implications of an important future? A mission deciding the fate of my position in Garden? Why must I become so important? I wish only to be left alone.'

Squall continued his silent musings until he reached the quarters to the debriefing room. Whatever his destiny would be, he could do nothing about it. What mattered to him now was the present. And in the present, Squall had nothing to worry about but an impending battle that could ensure the loss of his very life.

Well, there ya have it! The first chapter of my alternate Final Fantasy fanfic. How do you like it? Interesting? Dumb? Let me know. Anyway, I don't know if anyone else had this idea too it just came to me though. I was playing my new playstation game The legends of Dragoon and It occurred to me that it would be cool if final fantasy 8 had all that knight stuff going on so I just wrote it. Well thanks for reading! Hope you all enjoyed it!

-Cordis

2. Default Chapter Title

> <meta name="Generator"> Squall rubbed the side of his neck as he chaffed under the protective armor of the Balamb knighthood

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FINAL FANTASY/ ALTERED TALE

CHAPTER 2

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Squall rubbed the side of his neck as he chaffed under the protective armor of the Balamb knighthood. The mission briefing had been short and to the point. The objective was simply to provide backup support for the allied Dollet contingent. Galbadian troops has stormed the fort so Squall and a hand full of other knights under the command of Battalion Commander Treppe were to sneak around to the back and secure the tower eliminating any enemies they came across.

Squall brooded the success of this mission over in his minds as thoughts of Quistis previous words filtered in through his mind. _'Do I really want to raise higher in rank then I already am?_' He asked himself.

Sitting across from him, Seifer Almasy was smiling smugly, basking in his arrogant confidence. Like Squall, he was also decked in silver armor from high cuffed shoulder plates to chest cavity plates to knee high armored boot plates. Underneath the weighted sheets of armor were the blue threads of the Balamb Garden knighthood uniform. Like Squall, Seifer was also chaffing under the closely fitted armor, however he was too proud of his status to say anything offensive about the highly praised material. The sun was unusually hot this day, which made the armor all that much harder to bear.

Commander Treppe, however, was all too familiar with the scorching hot air as well as the chaffing coils of armor around her. Of course her uniform was more flamboyant then the rest, sporting silver plated chest cavity armor along with mixed plate colors of gold and royal blue. She also wore a cape of crimson red lining and her slightly snug black uniform underneath sported similarly black chain mail. Although her armor would naturally make her more of a target for

enemy forces, there was method to her design. Each different colored plate armor signified a different degree of protection ultimately giving her the most protection out of the group.

Squall noticed all of this as he subconsciously caressed the hilt of his sacred sword. His sword was very rich in design and sported the emblem of the lionheart at the center of its hilt. He didn't really know why he cherished the blade so much but it was the only family heirloom he had. His father supposedly died during the last war and the only thing the man had to offer the son he left behind was his sword that was presented to Squall only recently upon successful completion of attaining knighthood. Growing up in an orphanage with Seifer Almasy, Squall never really put much stock in family so he was completely surprised when he was actually awarded something that belonged to his father. That didn't mean he held him in high standards however. As far as Squall was concerned, he never wanted to see the man. He felt betrayed that he would be abandoned in such a way. This never really effected him until his sister who took care of him in the orphanage abruptly left him without a trace. It was at that point that Squall had given up on families in general and from then on, wanted nothing to do with any of it. Squall was independent. The only thing he needed now was himself. He didn't need anyone else.

"Hey Ice boy, what are you so deep in thought about?" Seifer asked breaking his reverie. "Still feeling the effects of that can of whoop ass I opened up on you earlier eh?"

Squall glared daggers at him but didn't say anything.

"Whooo I'm scared! The scary face! Ohhh nooo whatever shall I do!" Seifer sarcastically mocked him.

"Enough with the joking Almasy!" Quistis ordered. "I'm sure I speak for everyone in this transport when I say we have had more then our fill of your senseless banter!"

Seifer grinned widely. "Yet again, it's Battalion Commander Treppe to the rescue. You know, correct me if I'm wrong but I thought the lady was supposed to be the damsel and the guy was supposed to be the knight. I guess Ice boy over here's got one too many feminine qualities! He needs to be saved by 'the Commander' every time! Or maybe I'm wrong. Maybe it's just the Commander who's too masculine! She needs to save her weak pathetic little subordinate whom I'm sure we all know isn't 'just' a subordinate in her eyes."

Quistis was infuriated. Enough was enough. "Seifer, you really don't want that promotion do you? You're going to fail your test before you've even begun!"

Seifer shot her an arrogant grin but there was something in his eyes that assured her he would stop his banter. And she was right on the money because with that he sat back in his seat and idly toyed with his sacred sword. If there was one thing Seifer was ever serious and even reverent about then it was his sword. Like Squall, the sword was legendary and had value to it. When Squall was presented with his family heirloom so too was Seifer presented with this sword of honor. It was said to have been wielded by the Legendary knight known as Vanguard who was said to have vanquished the first and most powerful Sorceress after she had become corrupted with power. Being that

Seifer and Squall were the most skilled knights to ever come out of Garden, the decision of who would inherit the sword next was an easy choice to make. Although, it would have gone to Squall, had he not already been inline to inherit the sword of his father. Surprising to everyone was how much care Seifer actually took with his sword. It was absolutely the only thing he would every actually be completely serious about.

Quistis pondered the man's attachment with the sword as she sat in her seat waiting for the inevitable. As if on cue to this, emergency lights began to flash and loud sirens began to blare out in the small compartment.

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Seifer looked out into the window as the other Garden transports sped off into action. "Show time."

Squall looked around at everyone in the transport. Besides him, Quistis and Seifer, everyone else seemed to show different degrees of nervousness. Despite all the years of training they all had, war was a serious thing and at any moment they could all die. Squall was used to death. Apparently so was Seifer. As far as Quistis was concerned, she couldn't afford to worry about death because of her responsibility as leader.

Besides them, there were 11 other knights in the transport. There was the famous duo, Biggs and Wedge. Both of whom, were slackers when it came to off time but on the field they had gained enough notoriety to become eligible for positions of rank. Then there was Carter, Reenkor, Doppler, Monter, and Phillips. All five of them were all good knights and had leading potential but they were only average fighters. Jerrard was almost as cold as Squall since he never talked but he at least showed more emotion. And on top of that, he was nowhere near as skilled in fighting as Squall was. Talisar was unanimously named the wimpy one of the group. He didn't have a lot of courage but he had a strong heart. Cid probably saw that when he was selecting candidates. Coleman was a veteran in the Garden knighthood and by far had the most field experience. The only thing surprising about his presence aboard was that he wasn't recruited sooner. And lastly there was Nida. He was quiet for the most part but it was rumored that he was head over heels for Battalion Commander Trepe.

"Ice boy, snap out of it!" Seifer called from his seat. He was unstrapping himself from his chair. Squall looked around and noticed that everyone else was doing the same thing. His face flushed a bit red then he too began to remove the safety locks of his chair.

Seifer saw his embarrassed demeanor and began chuckling silently. Quistis didn't like the smug look on his face and charged up to him once she was free of her safety locks.

"May I ask what you think is so funny Almasy? This is not a game! You slip up for even a second during a battle and you're-"

But before Quistis could finish, she was interrupted by a loud
::BOOM:

Everyone in the transport fell over from the momentum of the blast.

Squall fell back into his seat but he immediately shot back out. Quistis fell onto Seifer but he steadied her as he just barely held onto his balance, grabbing hold of one of the pipes on the ceiling of the transport.

"Why Commander, I didn't know you were so forward." He said with a smirk.

In response to this Quistis elbowed him in the armor plated chest then regained her own balance once again. "Don't test my patience any further Almay or I will make it so that you never gain rank in the knighthood."

Normally Seifer would have replied with another witty comment. However his attention was distracted by the horrifying scene he was viewing from outside the window of their transport.

"Commander." He said in an unusually serious and flat voice. "Were we supposed to come under this kind of heavy enemy fire?"

Quistis immediately rushed to the window to look outside. "Oh my God!"

Before her very eyes, Garden transports were being blown out of the water. From the island, huge beam cannons were firing massive shots at them. They didn't stand a chance.

Quistis breath caught in her throat. "This was supposed to be a surprise attackâ€| they were on to us. Someone must have tipped them off. This is all a big set up."

Squall looked on at the destruction with a blank expression on his face as usual. "Commander what are your orders? Should we pull back and regroup?"

"No, it's too late for that. If we pulled back now we'd just be blown out of the water like everyone else. It's best if we continue with the mission. We still have a chance of pulling it off. If we can secure the tower then we've won."

"If we live that long." Seifer snorted in disdain. "Everyone else is getting blown to bits out there. What makes you think the same thing won't happen to us?"

Quistis smiled so sweetly, Nida's blood ran cold.

"Why Seifer, could it be that you're scared?"

"I fear nothing!" Seifer growled in barely suppressed anger. The worst thing you could ever do to Seifer was to call him a coward. Such a violation of his honor was unforgivable in his eyes. He continued to stare daggers at Quistis who simply gave him a smug poker face in return.

Suddenly the P.A. speakers of the transport came to life, breaking the tension. "We've got drop off in two minutes folks. Be ready." Yelled the pilot. There was no more time left. The battle had begun.

:::::::::: To Be Continuedâ€|

Well ok that was a bit short but I wanted to stop here otherwise it would have been a long chapter. So anyway I hope you all enjoyed it. I'm really liking this story! So anyway, as always, thanks for reading and Please review and tell me what you all think!

-Cordis

3. Default Chapter Title

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FINAL FANTASY/ ALTERED TALE

CHAPTER 3

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The transport rammed hard into the deep brown earth as it made its final stop. Once the hatch opened Squall and his companions hurried out. They could hear the sounds of war from the other side of the mountain as they made their way along the trail.

"Ok we've finally made it to land." Quistis informed them. "Now our job is to follow this path north for a few kilometers then we'll be heading east all the way until we reach the check point. Ok people lets get moving!"

They all followed with Seifer stubbornly lagging a bit behind everyone else.

"Pick up the pace Almasy!" Quistis yelled from her position at the front. "You'll slow us down if you lag behind like that!"

"Shut up!" Seifer hollered back. "I'm doing my best!"

Quistis wanted to scream. Why on earth had Seifer even been considered for a position in rank. Even worse, of all the people to have to put up with him, why was she given that responsibility.

The trek to the checkpoint was uneventful for the most part. They hadn't encountered any enemies so the cover was still clean. However, at the same time, this was having a detrimental effect on morale. Mainly, that problem was just centered towards one person. Seifer.

"Damn these Galbadian wimps! What the hell kind of knights are they if they're not even going to fight us! This is dog training I tell ya!"

"Seifer, for the love of God, SHUT UP!!!" Quistis yelled.

Seifer had been ranting for the past half hour they had been walking and everyone was fed up with him by now.

Seifer glared at his Commanding officer but said nothing.

"I think we've reached the checkpoint." Squall said, pointing to the path ahead.

"Good! Now maybe we can see some action!" Seifer said, enthusiastically.

"Don't even start that up again Seifer!" Quistis said as she walked along side Squall. She pulled out her binoculars and examined the area Squall had suggested. After a few minutes of staring through the lens bifocals, Quistis lowered them and nodded her head.

"You were right Squall. That's definitely our spot."

"Yew wur rite Squall dat's definitely our spot!" Seifer mimicked mockingly. "Why not kiss his ass some more Commander! Boost his ego sky high! Come on, score one for the team!"

Quistis was just about ready to burst. Seifer had danced on her very last nerve.

"Ok here's the plan. I want you all to wait here while I scout ahead for a bit. I want to make sure the area's clear before we advance. Besides, I'm worried that if we snuck in together, Seifer would give away our position."

Seifer sent a hateful look her way.

"Anyway, Squall your in charge until I get back. Keep Seifer in line and try not to get into any fights in the process."

Squall nodded his head while Seifer threw up his arms in surprise. "You're putting a whole contingent under the command of Ice boy here? Commander you have got to stop playing favorites and put duty before pleasure some time!"

Quistis smiled sarcastically. "Seifer if I were to put duty before pleasure then you would still be back on the transport tied to your chair. Anyway, I don't have time to debate the issue with you. Squall is in charge until I return and that's final. Squall if I'm not back in 15 minutes then advance without me."

"Yes maim."

Some of the knights began to chuckle as Seifer's pride was bruised but they all stopped immediately when he glared back at them.

The entire Fort of Dollet was in turmoil. Screams bathed the air along with the endless billows of smoke. Yet it was at the heart of this great Fort that the infamous mage group, called the Forest Owls, found themselves. Rinoa Heartilly, leader of the Forest Owls, along with her companions Watts and Zane were all trapped in the Dollet prison cells. They had initially tried to sabotage a Galbadian platoon in Timber but failed and ended up being transported here. They were supposed to be taken to Galbadia but apparently their captors were called off that assignment so without knowing what else to do with them, the Galbadian soldiers brought them along. The Dollet Fort was just recently taken by Galbadia and now The resolute mage group found themselves locked away in the lower levels. Unfortunately, the Galbadian soldiers didn't know too much about mages or else they would have known that no ordinary cell could hold one, much less a mage with the skill of Rinoa Heartilly.

Decked out in a flimsy sky blue robe with a black cord tied around the waist, Rinoa was dressed like she was the epitome of the way mages should look. Watts and Zane were also endowed in robes although theirs were not as baggy and had a faint gray color instead of blue.

Rinoa let out a sigh for the tenth time that day. They had been biding their time, waiting for the guard to leave until they made their escape however the sentry hadn't budged one bit the whole time. Things were beginning to look grim.

"Psst, Rinoa."

"What is it Watts?" Rinoa whispered back.

"Are you sure you don't just want me to use a sleep spell on him?"

Rinoa had thought about that earlier however it would be too risky if they did that. If the guard was actually called away that would mean that they were too busy with the battle to worry about them. They had recently heard the loud sounds of the main cannon outside. Rinoa took that as a sign that soon things would get too hot for the Galbadian troops and they would have to take the front line soon but so far it's been nearly an hour and still things had not escalated.

"Watts lets give it another hour. If nothing happens then we can use your sleep spell ok?"

Watts shot her a wide grin and nodded his head enthusiastically. "You got it princess!"

Rinoa cringed at that title. She was the daughter of King Caraway. Being the daughter of the man in charge of ordering the Galbadian soldiers was not something to be proud of in her eyes. Ever since her father had taken on an advisor in the form of Lady Edea, he had been cruel and almost evil to his subjects. It was such a drastic change that Rinoa had run away. Of course that had all been years ago. She was only twelve years old at the time. Five years of living as a civilian had changed her an awful lot since then.

Zane walked over to Watts and tapped him on the shoulder.

"What is it Zane?"

"Rinoa doesn't like being called princess."

"What? How do you know?"

Zone shook his head in annoyance at his friend's stupidity. "Take a look at how her face pales when you call her that. And then think about what she is the 'princess' of. She's just too polite to tell you how uneasy it makes her feel."

Rinoa's cheeks flushed at how well Zone could read her. "No, its ok Zone. It's true that I feel really uneasy at being reminded of what I truly am but that's just it. I can't hide what I am and having Watts around to remind me every once in a while is reassuring in a way. It may hurt but it's also necessary. And it helps to strengthen my resolve and purpose in what we have set out to do here."

Zone nodded in understanding while Watts just scratched his head.

Rinoa smiled. She was glad she had met these two. Of all the people in the world to be trapped in a deep dark cell with, she wouldn't rather be stuck with anyone else. "Well boys, I guess now all we can do is wait and bide our time. Trust me, I've got a feeling something will come up soon."

Quistis slowly crept through the outcroppings of weeds and bushes until she made her way to the checkpoint. As it turned out, the checkpoint was directly behind the tower. For the first time since beginning this mission, her spirits rose. They could easily penetrate the tower now.

Quistis slowly advanced further towards the tower. She wanted to get an accurate idea of what they would be going up against before they charged in blindly. She stealthily crept up to the side of the structure then pulled out her GF. She meticulously junctioned it to her sword then cast a seeing spell on herself. This spell let her see any objects she wanted for a limited amount of time.

She slowly scanned the tower noting that it was guarded but not by much. The troops that were there seemed to be doing some kinds of maintenance work or something. Her contingent could take them easily. Especially when it consisted of some of the very best Knights Balam Garden could produce.

"Piece of cake." She whispered to herself as she made her way back down the trail. Little did she know that, as she made her trek down, watchful eyes were viewing her every movement.

"Any sign of the Commander?" Seifer asked, disinterestedly.

Squall shook his head. "No, she hasn't come back yet." He replied in a flat voice.

"Always the cold one aren't ya? You act like you don't care about anything."

Everyone else was apparently lost in their own little worlds. Biggs and Wedge were arguing over some trivial thing like which bar was best to get drunk at. Everyone else was engrossed in a quick game of Triple Card Triad.

Squall didn't reply. He simply continued to look out in the distance, scanning the horizon for any possible sign of enemy movement. Seifer was beginning to become agitated. Squall had a tendency to ignore him whenever he heard anything that wasn't absolutely relevant for him to hear.

"This is your first battle right?" Seifer asked trying to start up a conversation.

"Yeah." Squall answered flatly.

"Soâ€¦? How does it feel? The first battle is always the best! The rush, the exhilaration! It's the best feeling in the world! After that, it just goes downhill. There's nothing better than the feel of cold metal in your hands and there's no better drug than the heat of battle but stillâ€¦ the first time is always the best."

Squall was silent for a few minutes; perhaps absorbing all of this information in. "Tell me Seifer." He asked finally. "Is fighting all you ever think about?"

Seifer gave him an odd look. "Why of course it is! Fighting is like an art and I'm the perfectionist! It's the only thing that can entertain someone like me. There's nothing more worthy of my attention than the fight!"

"That's not the right mindset for someone who is to be a leaderâ€¦"

Seifer's expression suddenly became serious. "Who cares about what the 'mindset' of a leader is! It's all about skill! Don't try to psychoanalyze me ice boy!"

Squall looked down for a moment, deep in thought. "But stillâ€¦ fighting is not enough of a reason to keep on living. What keeps you going every day? What is your drive?"

Seifer smiled. "That's easy. The challenge! There's always going to be someone a little better than you or maybe a little different. It's the challenge of pushing myself to the limit that keeps me going. And I reward myself with victory."

Squall subconsciously caressed the scar across his forehead. He looked over and noticed that Seifer was doing the exact same thing. They simply sat there, staring off into space. However, what might have been exchanged between them had they noticed the enormity of what they were doing, was forever lost to the winds as Quistis suddenly came into view.

"Hey gang I'm back!" Quistis said cheerfully. She quickly walked over to Squall. "Did he give you any trouble?"

Squall shook his head once then looked away. He wasn't one to make evaluation reports on other people's behaviors.

Seifer sneered in the background. "So what did you find Commander?"

"Did I miss something? Seifer is actually being serious for a change. Well I did some investigating and I found that the tower is lightly guarded. We can storm in easily. But we have to do it in a way as not to draw attention to ourselves, otherwise we'll have the whole Galbadian military down our throats."

Seifer looked annoyed beyond belief. "Oh hell that's just great! How the hell do you 'STORM' a tower 'LIGHTLY'?"

"That does seem kind of far fetched Commander." Squall added in.

"I know but don't worry. I have a plan."

Seifer made an exasperated look. "Oh God! Yet another brilliant 'plan' from the Commander!"

Quistis ignored Seifer's rude comments and turned to face the whole group. "Ok here's what we're going to do. There are three main entrances in the tower that we can sneak in unnoticed. However, due to the way the tower is set up, too many of us in one group could make too much noise and thus through our cover out to the wind. Therefor I have broken us up into three groups. "Biggs, Wedge, Nida, Doppler, Talisar and Coleman; I want you all to be Squad A. Coleman, your ranking commander of that squad. Meanwhile Squall and I will make up Squad B."

Seifer couldn't suppress a snicker in the background. Quistis frowned but continued on anyway.

"Seifer, you, Carter, Reenkor, Monter, Phillips and Jerrard will make up Squad C. Seifer you've got command of this squad, don't make me regret it. Ok, now here's what we do. Squad B, consisting of Squall and myself, will infiltrate the tower first. We will make our way to the top of the tower where the communications array is. After we disable it, ensuring that they won't be able to send any signals to the Fort, Squad C will begin the raid and storm the east side of the tower. Seifer, I'm counting on you to get the job done. Once Squall and I disrupt the communications console we will be badly outnumbered. Meanwhile, Squad A will provide lookout to make sure our coast is clear. If things get too hot for Squads C and B, we will radio in to you for extra support Squad A. In that instance, you are to infiltrate the tower from the west end. But otherwise keep your positions. We don't need Galbadian military troops hard on our heels. With any luck we should be able to secure the tower long enough for the main Garden army to arrive and provide support. So, any questions?"

"Just one." Seifer said with a smirk.

Quistis sighed visibly. "What?"

Seifer's face was beaming with a huge smile. "Why is it that you get to go on a solo mission with Ice boy over here? The rest of us not good enough or something?"

Some of the knights began to laugh. Seifer was beaming and Squall

just sat there with no expression on his face as if he didn't care what was being said. Quistis, however, was beat red in the face.

She respectfully cleared her throat before answering Seifer. The knights immediately stopped their laughing, however Seifer was still flashing his smug look. "To answer your question Seifer, the reason why I picked Squall is because quite frankly he is the only one amongst you that has the skill to be stealthy enough to infiltrate the tower up to the upper levels without being detected. No offense to the rest of you but there really wasn't any other choice."

"Ha, I'm just as skilled as Ice boy! Yet for some reason you didn't choose me." Seifer supplied with a wicked grin.

"Maybe it has something to do with that overused mouth of yours giving away our position?" Quistis replied. Seifer said no more but still wore that smug grin on his face. Quistis wanted nothing more than to throw him and that much hated smirk in the ocean but as he so kindly stated earlier, duty before pleasure. So instead, she simply ignored his arrogance and went on with the mission.

"Ok, so you all know what is requested of you. Lets get this mission underway!" So with that, the Troops rose to their feet and got ready for action. Suddenly the ground shook violently followed by a loud
BOOM

** **

"What the hell?" Seifer growled.

Quistis immediately took out her binoculars and scanned the horizons. "Boys it looks like our mission time just got cut in half cause the cavalry has just arrived!"

In the distance a dozen Garden transports zoomed in ruthlessly laying waste to the Dollet Fort. Everything was set into motion. Victory was at hand. All that remained now was the successful completion of Quistis plan and the battle would be over.

Well ok so this one wasn't that action packed either. But in this case, the 4th time's a charm as our hero's will storm the tower. Then I guarantee sparks will fly. Anyway thanks for reading and please review!

-Cordis

4. Default Chapter Title

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**

FINAL FANTASY/ ALTERED TALE

CHAPTER 4

**

Rinoa, Watts and Zone all heard the loud noise from above. Right on cue with that noise, the soldier guarding them became giddy and restless. Rinoa beamed with a bright smile.

"See? I told you something would come up!" She whispered to her companions. "Now all we have to do is wait for the guard to go help his comrades then we're home free."

The guard seemed to be preoccupied in thoughts about his comrades. Rinoa used that to her advantage. "Wow, it sounds pretty bad out there!" She said in a loud voice, trying to stoke for fire of the man's already raging heart. "I hope its over quick. It sounds like a big one."

"Shut up!" The guard screamed at her. Suddenly there was another loud **BOOM **and the prison area shook violently. Rinoa couldn't have hoped for a better time. This snapped the guard's last straw. He unsheathed his sword then pointed it at them. "I'm coming right back! If any of you so much as move before I return, I will kill you!" and with that, the sentry left the room unguarded with a group of mages under wraps. Bad choice.

Rinoa giggled and her companions chuckled behind her. She nonchalantly cast a fire spell on the lock effectively freeing them. As she stepped out into the open room she turned to face her companions. "See? That wasn't so bad now was it? Anyway, come on! Lets get moving before anyone finds out we're missing." They all nodded and with that, they scampered out of the prison area.

Biggs sat back lazily as he looked off into the horizons. "Wow." He said with a sigh, absently playing with his helmet. The helmets of Garden were fashioned in a way that they had two parts. One part was simply the helmet that covered the head and ran down the base of the skull covering part of the neck. The other part was a face shield in front of the helmet that could be adjusted so that it could either be pulled up or pushed down. It was this little function of the helmet that intrigued Biggs so much at the moment. "Ya know Wedge, I feel kinda guilty just sitting here while I watch my fellow knights die in the distance."

Currently Squad A was stationed on a prairie overlooking the battlegrounds. This would effectively give them a good view if any enemy forces chose to side track either Squad B or Squad C. However, by the looks of how things were going with the battle, there wouldn't be any Galbadian troops left to attack. But still, orders were orders and Squad Leader Coleman would die before disobeying them.

Wedge nodded to Biggs statement only halfheartedly. "Uh hu." He said distantly. "Hey Biggs, why do you think the Squad Leader never got promoted? I mean he's a stickler for taking orders by the book right?"

And to top that off, he's got more combat experience then all of us combined and he's a hell of a fighter too! So why is he only now getting promoted to rank?"

Biggs looked at Wedge with annoyance. "Don't ask stupid questions Wedge!"

Wedge smirked. "So you don't know either huh?"

"Not a clue."

Biggs and Wedge just sat there pondering the 'question of the day'.

Meanwhile, Nida, Doppler and Talisar were all playing a game of Triple Card Triad. "Ha I win again!" Cried Nida in glee as the other two players grudgingly handed him their GF cards.

Coleman just sat there at the edge of the prairie not taking his eyes off the horizon. He diligently wore his helmet atop his head without a thought about the oppressive heat. He wouldn't fail his teammates no matter what. After all his years of fighting, he was sick of war. Ever since his brother died in his arms, he had wanted nothing to do with fighting. However at the same time, if he quit he would be letting his comrades down. A few years ago Cid offered him the position of rank and he kindly refused. He didn't want any more lives on his hands then necessary. Already, his hands were bathed in blood. He didn't want to be responsible for any more. And so he kept his position as a grunt despite Supreme Commander Cid's adamant protests. Finally, Cid offered him a high position of rank where he didn't have to fight anymore. Coleman was still skeptical about it but saw it as the lesser of two evils and decided to take Cid up on his offer. All he had to do was to take his place on the battlefield one last time so as to give Cid reason to promote him. Coleman accepted and was eagerly looking forward to the chance to get as far away from the bloodshed as possible.

"Hey boss!" Biggs yelled from his post. "Any sign of trouble?"

Coleman shook his head in response. "No we've got a clean position. But don't get soft. Stay frosty. Never know when these Galbadian knights might-"

**

BOOM

**

Everyone in Squad A looked up in surprise at the loud sound. "What the hell is that?" Coleman yelled as a huge black orb formed on the trail, just past the battleground. Suddenly, a huge platoon of Galbadian troops rushed from it followed by the X-ATM092 which was fueled by GF spirits.

"Shit!" Coleman seethed. "They're heading right for the tower! We gotta stop them!"

Suddenly there was another loud **BOOM **followed by a trail of

electricity and then, standing right behind them was another smaller squadron of Galbadian knights with huge grins on their faces.

Biggs and Wedge both wore the same expressions of disbelief.

"Uhhâ€¦ Sir?" Wedge said breathlessly. "We're screwed!"

Coleman Grimaced in anger and disgust. "Shit! How did they know?" He unsheathed his sword and pointed it towards the Galbadian knights. _'Looks like we're caught between a rock and a hard place.' _He thought to himself. _'If we don't fight with all we've got, we'll be killed. I just hope Squad C can stop those troops before they get to The Commander and Squall.' _

Suddenly his thoughts were interrupted as the Galbadian knight leader yelled "CHARGE!"

Time had just run out. Coleman was left with only one option.

"Squad A ATTACK!" _ _

_ _

Squall and Quistis had infiltrated the tower with ease. Quistis was on the money for enlisting the aid of Squall Lionheart. The man moved like snake, silent and deadly. In no time they had reached the second floor of the tower and they were still undetected.

"We're making good time." Quistis said, a bit breathless from the long trek up. Squall, on the other hand, didn't even seem winded by the trip.

"At this rate, we'll be done with the mission before the day is done." Quistis said with a smile on her face. Suddenly as she moved forward, that smile became a grimace of frustration and surprise. "What the hell? Damnit I must have overlooked this!"

Right in the path ahead of Quistis and Squall, was a corridor that jutted off in two different directions. Quistis sighed heavily.

"Damn, I don't know which path to take."

"Why don't we just split up?" Squall offered nonchalantly. "Whoever makes it to the top of the tower can radio in and hold their position until the other one gets there. That doesn't seem too difficult."

Quistis brightened suddenly. "No it doesn't. As a matter of fact it sounds great! Squall you're a genius! Just you wait, You'll make rank in the Knighthood yet!"

Quistis rose back up to her feet. "Ok, I'll take the right wing and you take the left one. Fair enough?"

Squall nodded then without another word, began to make his way down

the left corridor, securing his seed helmet atop his head. Quistis felt a pang in her heart and desperately called out to him.
"Squall!"

Squall stopped in his tracks and looked back towards her, a hint of annoyance pasted on his face.

Quistis flushed a deep shade of red that she had needlessly called out to him. It was very unprofessional. She desperately searched for a reason why she would call his name so as to placate him. "Ummâ€¦ Good luck! Just be careful out there ok? I don't want to lose you."

Squall raised an eyebrow at her.

"In battle, I mean! You're a very valuable soldier!" She stammered shamefacedly. She was secretly glad Seifer wasn't around. He was just the type of person who would have taken prime advantage of this show of vulnerability she was displaying.

Squall, on the other hand, just shrugged and continued to walk down the corridor. Quistis felt slightly dejected at this act of blatant disinterest but quickly set her mind back to the task at hand. She straightened up her composure and started towards her path on the right.

Seifer Almasy was bored. He had been sitting on the same rock, listening to the same chatter, and staring at the same damn scenery for what seemed like hours. However, in all actuality, it had only been 15 minutes.

"Ahhh! Damnit!" He screamed as he swiped his sword at the air. "What the hell is taking them so long!"

Jarrard shrugged then answered his question. "It probably takes a while for them to reach the top Seifer. It is a pretty big structure you know."

Seifer glared at Jarrard. "When I'm in command, address me as Squad Leader! You got that?"

Jarrard rolled his eyes in irritation but nodded his head anyway. "Yes sir, Squad leader sir." He said in a lazy voice. This caused some of the other knights to laugh.

"Silence!" Seifer yelled. Now he was totally pissed. "Jarrard go over there and provide look out in case of surprise attack!" He commanded, pointing his sword in the direction he wished the man to go.

Jarrard shrugged his shoulders then complied. The other knights were effectively silenced and went back to their own various tasks to pass the time.

Seifer looked up into the sky sighing to himself. This was such a blow off mission. Already, they had been nearly two hours into the mission and they hadn't fought one damn enemy.

"This sucks!" Seifer said to no one in particular.

From his spot, a few yards away from the others, Jarrard glared daggers at Seifer. The way he had dismissed him was embarrassing. He felt like a kid who got punished by being sent to a corner. What was the point of scanning for enemies anyway? If there was trouble coming, squad A would notify them anyway. The only reason he could think of for being sent here was so that Seifer could save face in front of the others.

—
_ 'That arrogant bastard!' _ Jarrard thought to himself.

Suddenly something caught Jarrard's eye that he never would have expected to see. "Uh, Squad Leader? I think you better take a look at this!" He called cautiously.

Seifer shot him an annoyed glare. "What the hell do you want Jarrard?" Seifer stormed over to where the Knight stood, fully intending to chastise him.

Once Seifer got close enough, Jarrard stood to the side. "Squad Leader, take a look at that! I can hardly believe my eyes!"

Seifer narrowed his eyes at his subordinate but followed suit. Seifer's mouth dropped. A thousand questions entered his mind at once. "What the hell?!" He muttered.

They looked on towards the Squadron of Galbadian Knights marching in the distance followed by the X-ATM092.

Jarrard looked at his leader questioningly. "Your orders Squad Leader? This was definitely not incorporated into our scenario of events."

"Indeed it wasn't." Seifer agreed as he continued to stare out at the huge contingent of Galbadian military Knights. "Hey wait a minute! They're heading straight for the front side of the tower! We've got to cut them off or Squall and the Quistis are gonna be a lot deader then they had initially anticipated!"

Jarrard nodded his head in agreement.

"Sir! We've got trouble!" Carter yelled urgently.

Seifer twisted his head and saw that a squad of Galbadian soldiers were emerging from a forest of trees a few feet away from them.

"Damnit!" Seifer seethed.

"This is not good." Jarrard said with a lump in this throat.

"No kidding." Seifer agreed silently. He had no problems fighting, however things were a whole lot more complicated now. He had to fight these soldiers and, at the same time, protect Quistis and Squall who were about to get ambushed by a whole contingent of Knights and an X-ATM092.

"Shit!" Seifer cursed. "Ok then Knights. Let's take this one step at a time. If we work hard then we can beat these Galbadian wimps and still have enough time to save Squall and Quistis. Jarrard raise squad A and notify them of our situation!"

"I already did! Their transmitter's been cut off!"

"What?!?"

One of the Galbadian Knights, most likely the leader, began to laugh. "They fell into the same trap you did! They won't be able to help you! They're going to die just like you!" and with that, the Galbadian Knights rushed the squad of Garden Knights with ferocious intensity.

Seifer automatically withdrew his sacred blade and raised it using his custom one armed, fighting style. "Knights!" He commanded. "We have no choice! ATTACK!"

Immediately after saying that, the two opposing forces came rushing towards each other, clashing swords. One of the Galbadian Knights swung his blade at Seifer. At the last minute, he raised his sword, blocking the man's downward thrust.

"Hmph, too easy!" Seifer hissed as he pushed on his blade and sent the Knight's sword flying high into the air. In the same motion, he spun 180 degrees, then flipped his sword around backwards and impaled the man between the seams of his chest plate.

"Who's next?" The Balamb Knight yelled as he donned his helmet and lowered the faceplate.

The sounds of battle grew louder as Rinoa made her way further down a dirt trail. Halfway out of the Fort, she had decided to split up with Watts and Zone so as to draw less attention. They had agreed that they would meet on the outskirts of Dollet a few miles east of the tower.

Rinoa had made great haste in escaping her battleground prison. She had used her GF magic to cast haste on herself enabling her to move at hyper speed. She was now standing a few feet from the tower. She stopped in utter shock as she looked up at the great structure. _'Wow!_' She thought _'Is this really the same place that everyone's been talking about? Can the Galbadian military really transmit messages from here?_'

Suddenly, her thoughts were interrupted as a loud noise resounded in the distance. Rinoa was panicked. She quickly scanned the area trying to find a place where she could hide but she couldn't spot any. She slowly looked back up at the tower and noticed a small opening on the side of it, 12 feet from ground level. _'Well I guess this is better then getting caught again!_' _She thought to herself as she looked back at the source of the approaching Knights. She quickly cast float on herself and flew over to the opening, quickly scampering inside before the approaching Knights could spot her.

She breathed a sigh of relief then scanned her surroundings. Her eyes

widened in shock as she looked up at the seemingly endless spiral staircase hanging above her. Never before had she ever seen such an incredible structure.

Suddenly, the sounds of footsteps reverberated through the corridor. She quickly jumped into the shadows and silently called up a spell. As soon as the figure was in view, she launched her attack.

"THUNDER!" She cried as the huge volt of electric energy rushed towards the approaching figure.

To her shock, the man quickly jumped out of the way then charged towards her, unsheathing his sword. Rinoa hesitated but quickly called up another spell.

"FIRE!" She yelled hurling the ball of flame forward.

"SHELL!" Hollered the man in return. The fire spell rammed into the barrier and the man sliced the remaining embers of flame away with his deadly sword. Rinoa was utterly speechless. A million thoughts ran through her mind at once. _'How was he able to call upon that spell? Only the elite Galbadian Knights are allowed that privilege! What have I gotten myself into!_' _Reality quickly returned to her as she saw the man continue his charge. He was too close for her to use another spell so she tried to retreat. She blindly stumbled on a rock and the last thing she saw was the downward thrust of his blade, with the emblem of Lionheart blazing on its hilt.

Well I guess that was the best I could do for a cliff hanger! So anyway, I hope you all enjoyed This 4th chapter to my medival fanfic! By the way, it was brought to my attention that the communications system the Knights were using to communicate with each other shouldn't exist in this time period. Now that I think about it, I absolutely agree. My mistake, I guess I got too into the technology of ff8. Anyway I'll try to find some way to explain that in the story! Anyway thanks for reading and please review! J

-Cordis

5. Default Chapter Title

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**

FINAL FANTASY/ ALTERED TALE

CHAPTER 5

** **

CLANG

**

Squall's eyes widened in shock as his sword thrust was met by another. He immediately recovered and pushed forward, further locking his sword with his opponent's.

Rinoa gasped from the intensity of this man's vigor however she would not yield so easily. Quickly, she dashed to the side, letting the knight's momentum carry him forward. Once he passed forward, she brought her sword down in an overhead thrust.

**

CLANG

**

Again their swords met, as the Garden Knight parried her attack at the last second. Although Squall was fairing well against his adversary, he was silently impressed beyond belief at her skill.

—

'He's quite a fighter!' Squall thought to himself as he blocked another attack. _'I never thought I would ever meet a mage who's as skilled in sword fighting as he is in magic. Looks like I'm in for quite a challenge!_' _

Meanwhile, on the other end of the battle, Rinoa was thinking on a similar line of thought. _'Wow! Who is this guy? No one has ever gotten this close through my defenses except one. This guy must really be high ranking in Galbadia to be this good! I guess I should feel honored!_' _

— —

Just then, Squall rammed his sword forward, momentarily knocking her off balance. Rinoa tried to steady herself but it was too late. Squall charged up and drove his sword forward.

**

SLICE

**

Rinoa fell back. She couldn't believe what had just happened. Squall stood silently before her. His expressionless face was covered behind his steel plated face shield and helmet. Her mouth hung wide open, while fear and blood were etched all over her face.

She clutched her arm. Squall just stood there, not moving a muscle while his sword was still embedded partially inside of the wall. Rinoa had swiftly moved out of the way during his strike, causing him to only graze her arm, while most of his force went into the wall instead. However, it had been a close call resulting in a deep shock for Rinoa. Never, had anyone ever gotten this close to her.

"W- who are you?" She managed to ask through her trembling lips.

Squall responded by slamming his foot against the wall and yanking his sword free from its embedded position. Stepping back, he observed his adversary wearily as he slightly lowered his sword. Yet again, he found himself shocked by the skill of this mage. No one had ever survived that kind of attack.

"Wellâ€¦ aren't you going to answer my question?" Rinoa asked hesitantly.

Squall slowly raised his visor. His eyes showed mild surprise after realizing that the voice of his opponent was feminine.

Rinoa, on the other hand, couldn't help the gaping stare that came over her. _'He's drop dead gorgeous!' _She couldn't help but think to herself in shock.

"Who are you?" Squall asked in a flat, emotionless tone.

This emotionless tone sent Rinoa careening back into reality. She quickly shook off her gaping stare and glared at her enemy. "Why should I tell you when I asked you first?" She spat in a harsh tone.

Squall rolled his eyes at the childishness of this conversation. "I am a Knight of the Kingdom of Balamb Garden!" He said proudly.

Rinoa's eyes widened once more and she removed the hood from his face as she tried to get a better look at his armor. "Y- you mean your actually one of the Legendary seeds everyone's heard so much about!?"

Squall didn't answer as he was momentarily taken aback by the beauty of this young woman who had provided him with such a challenge earlier. He quickly shook his head, dispelling these thoughts and answered her question. "Yes, I am a Knight of Garden."

Rinoa still couldn't believe her ears. "Wow! I can't believe it! I mean they say you guys are the Legendary Knights who self appointed yourselves as the protectors of peace! I can't believe you actually showed up here! Does that mean your going to liberate our country from Galbadian rule?"

Squall was quickly becoming annoyed at the giddiness of this girl. "I take it you aren't associated with Galbadia then?" He asked mildly.

"Nope!" Rinoa replied cheerfully. "I'm part of a resistance group called the Forest Owls. Our mission has been to sabotage Galbadia's plans! Me and a few others were on a mission to attack Galbadian troops back in Timber but we got caught. Right now we're making our escape!"

Squall was annoyed beyond belief by her story. This information was totally irrelevant to his mission and was thus unimportant to him. "Whateverâ€¦" He replied in a flat voice.

Rinoa ignored this statement and continued. "We were supposed to meet up a few kilometers east of this tower. Hey, could you come with me? We could escape from here together!"

Squall shot her an angered glance. "I am not trying to escape from this tower. My mission is to infiltrate this structure and I mean to carry it out!"

"Oh." Rinoa replied simply, raising her finger to her lips.

Squall turned quickly and started up the stairs, continuing his original journey. "Hey wait!" Rinoa cried suddenly. Squall turned his head back towards her and sneered slightly at the interruption. "What?" He asked in a harsh tone.

"Why not let me come with you?" She replied cheerfully, unheeded by his attitude.

"Now why would I want you to come with me?"

"Because your all by yourself silly!" Rinoa answered with the same cheerful expression on her face. "If you go by yourself you may run into trouble and you won't be able to fend them all on your own. Someone's gotta watch your back. Besides, I know for a fact I wont be able to make it out of here alone so the most logical thing to do is accompany you while you complete your mission. Maybe then we can find someway out of here."

Squall cringed inwardly. He didn't want her to accompany him but she had presented the only possible solution left to them. If he did proceed while she tried to get out on her own, she would probably die and he didn't want to have her death on his hands. Finally coming to a conclusion, he turned his head slightly to face her. "Fine. Come along but don't make a noise or you'll give away our position."

Rinoa was beaming with a broad smile pasted across her face. "Yes sir, Captain!"

Squall shrugged his shoulders in exasperation at her excessive enthusiasm. "Don't call me that."

Rinoa's smile was unfazed. "Well since I don't know you're name ill just have to call you Sir Knight, then!" She said brightly. Squall sighed. This was going to be a long day.

"YAAAAAAA!" Biggs screamed as he charged towards one of the Galbadian Knights. He swung his sword down swiftly, slicking the man's head clean from his shoulders.

"Look out!" Someone yelled from the distance.

He swung around swiftly to find another Galbadian Knight impaled by a sword from behind. Standing there with his sword embedded in the enemy was none other then Wedge.

Bigg's raised his face shield and wiped sweat away from his brow.

"Whew! Thanks a lot buddy."

"No problem." Wedge replied. "Just watch your back. I may not be there next time."

Biggs nodded as he watched Wedge once again enter the pit of battle. Taking a moment to sigh, he lowered his face shield, then he too entered the bloodbath.

Coleman was fairing well in the battle as well. He ran up to one of the Galbadian Knights then leveled his sword to waist length and severed on man in half. Another Knight came from behind and swung his sword down. Coleman swiftly responded by blocking this thrust then raised his boot and rammed in forcefully into the man's gut. The Galbadian Knight stumbled from the impact and Coleman used that opportunity to his advantage. He ran up to the man that shoved his blade deep into his stomach. The man wailed in agony as the blade burst forth out from the other end.

Coleman thoughtlessly yanked his sword out of the dying man then swiftly wiped the blood free by sliding his weapon over a few blades of grass.

He caught the attention of the Galbadian Knight leader's eye and the man immediately rushed him in an insane rage. Coleman steadied his sword then thrust forth as the man swung his blade. Their swords clashed with a loud clang. Both men were intently locked into the heat of battle as their swords pushed against each other. Ultimately, Coleman came out on top as he forced the Galbadian leader back. He rushed forward to finish him but the man recovered swiftly and blocked his attack. Coleman was enraged. He pulled back then struck again. And again the man blocked his attack. He shoved Coleman's sword left and swung for his right side. Coleman swiftly scrambled out of the way then held his sword out a few feet away from his adversary.

Both men were panting profusely. "You're quite good." Coleman said as he lowered his sword in respect for his opponent.

The Knight nodded. "As are you. This is truly a well, matched fight. I am Sir Wardam, noble Knight. And what might your title be?"

"I am Sir Coleman. You are a worthy adversary and honorable too. I am honored to fight one such as yourself."

Wardam smiled in acknowledgement. "May the best Knight win then."

Coleman raised his sword once more. "To the winner, go the spoils. To the loser, goes the honor of dying by the blade of a better man."

And with that, both men resumed their relentless battle. On another front of the battlefield, Nida, Doppler, and Talisar were not doing so well. The brunt of the Knights were focused on them and they felt their edge waning more and more as fatigue took them over.

Talisar wildly swung his sword at one of the Galbadian Knights, missed, and almost hit Doppler. In return, the Galbadian Knight swung his sword high.

**

CLANG

**

At the last minute, Nida had intervened and blocked the man's thrust. The Knight jumped back and swung again. This time, towards Nida, however the young Balamb Knight was prepared for this and deftly dodged the strike. Still recovering from his attack, the man was left wide open. Nida took full advantage of this and plunged forth, spilling the man's entrails upon the ground.

Nida took a moment to glance at Talisar out of the side of his eye as he continued to ward off blows from other approaching Galbadian Knights. "Talisar, stay focused! Don't panic or you'll wind up dead or hurt one of us in the process! Keep your mind straight!" Just then another Galbadian Knight rushed forth slamming his shield into Nida, forcing him to fall down. He advanced again but was stopped short by Doppler. The Balamb Knight had run in front of the two and had effectively protected Nida from a quick death. Their swords clashed and Doppler buckled under the man's weight.

"Heh, too much to handle punk?" the man seethed with smelly breath. Doppler recalled himself, allowing the big man's momentum to carry him forward. He lost his balance the fell forward. Doppler quickly scrambled out of the way then rose up to stand over the man. Averting his eyes he swung his sword in a single sweeping motion and decapitated him.

Nida got up and brushed himself off. "Thanks!" He said in exasperation.

Doppler smiled but was immediately cut off as a sword plunged straight through his chest from behind. Nida's eyes widened in shock and he swiftly tackled the assailant to the ground. The two men wrestled with each other, locked in a desperate game of mortal combat as each man tried to reach for his sword. Nida thrust one elbow up under the man's jaw then rammed the other one into the man's forearm breaking his hold on his sword. On the Knight's part, he socked Nida in the face with his armor plated gloves then rammed the palm of his hand towards the seed's throat. Nida fumbled as he tried to catch his breath. The man rolled over and recovered his sword. Still gasping, Nida grabbed his leg and toppled him over. As he fell to the ground, Nida jumped on him and pummeled him with a nearby long he had picked up. The man's face flapped left and right as he was relentlessly beaten with the jagged log. Before he knew it, Nida's log was sopped in blood, gore and pieces of bone. He looked down at his victim's face and could only see a huge mass of red blood staring back at him. Nida quickly averted his gaze and got back up to his feet. Without another thought he rushed towards another Galbadian Knight who in turn charged at him. Nida could see nothing but the red haze of blood before his very eyes. At the sight of Doppler's death, he had lost all sense of his facilities and gone berserk on all of his enemies; much to their misfortune.

Wedge had just run one of the Galbadian Knights through, when he saw the wild actions of his comrade. He hadn't seen Doppler die, but as he glanced at his still body laying on the ground it all became clear

to him. Doppler and Nida were best friends. Thus he understood the man's sudden burst of energy. But, likewise, he also understood that it could lead to getting him killed or even worse, making him insane.

Without another thought, Wedge ran up to the Galbadian Knight closest to Nida and cut him down quickly with his sword. Nida shot a quick Glance at him. His pupils seemed dilated and he had the look of a madman.

After recognizing him in the wild blood haze of his mind, Nida turned away to face yet another victim. However, Wedge roughly grabbed the man before he could go off. Hey yanked Nida hard so that he was facing him.

"Nida listen to me! Calm down! If you don't you'll get killed! Listen I can guess what happened back there but don't go that rout. We can defeat these guys together but don't let Dopplers death me in vain. You got me?"

Nida's eyes swam over like a lost child for a minute. He seemed as if he were fighting with some internal demons. Wedge shook him again. "Nida snap out of it! You're stronger then this! I know you are!"

Slowly Nida closed his eyes then opened them again and began blinking rapidly. "W-wedge?" He swallowed hard as he realized what had come over him. "Man,â€ I, I don't know what to say. I'm sorry, I guess I just lost control back there. I-"

"Look, just save it for later ok? We still got a mission to finish ok?"

Nida nodded and was slightly shocked to see that the number of Galbadian Knights still standing was very low. If they continued fighting the way they were fighting they would win easily. Suddenly something else caught his eye that killed his smile. Talisar was currently facing off with three Galbadian Knights all at once. He didn't look like he could hold out much longer. Nida roughly grabbed Wedge's steel plated shoulder. "Come on! Talisar is in trouble! We gotta help him or we lose another Knight on this cursed mission." Wedge nodded his head and the two men charged off towards their endangered comrade.

Meanwhile, on the other end of the field, Coleman and his opponent Wardam where at the end of their ropes. Both men were beyond exhaustion as the stared into each other's eyes. Coleman was slumped over, leaning heavily on the hilt of his blade. Wardam was down on one knee, while his hand clutched his sword, which was embedded in the ground.

"I never would have imagined our battle would last this long." Wardam rasped.

Coleman nodded sagely. "Yes, It is a shame we must face off in such a duel. However, war is a cruel demon is she not?"

Wardam cracked a smile. "That she is." Slowly, he rose back up to his feet and clutched his sword with both hands. "Well then, shall we commence?"

In reply, Coleman similarly rose to his feet and raised his sword. The sun shone brilliantly on the two figures as they stood in the horizon facing off. It almost seemed like the very earth and sky knew how this next encounter would turn out and momentarily blazed these two Knights of glory with honor and respect.

A slight brush of wind ignited the battle. Wardam charged forth and swung his sword horizontally. Coleman met his thrust and parried it. He countered that by swinging his sword the opposite way. Wardam leapt back then dove forward once more, jabbing his sword out trying to impale the knight. Coleman blocked and parried as the rain of jabs and thrusts continued. After the fifth stroke, Wardam broke off into a 360 degrees strike. Coleman blocked but buckled from the intensity of the attack. He fell to one knee then rolled out of the way as a sword came swooping down on him. He inwardly sighed in relief as the sword dug deep into the earth only inches from where he stood.

Wardam wasn't finished. Panting heavily, he ripped his sword up out of the sodden earth and swung it in a horizontal arch towards Coleman. Coleman thrust his sword forth in a one armed block. Wardam smiled slightly. He had him. He curved his sword around and raised it high over Coleman's head then brought it down swiftly.

SLICE

Wardam's eyes opened wide and his knees buckled. Coleman was frozen in the same position. His arms were thrust forth and his sword was embedded through the man's chest. Apparently Wardam's fatigue had prevented him from anticipating Coleman's quick recovery. A huge amount of sorrow washed over Coleman's eyes as he slowly pulled his sword out of his adversary. Wardam closed his eyes then lifelessly fell to the ground. Still on one knee, Coleman gave him the Knights salute, then covered the man with his own cape.

Coleman didn't see the enraged Galbadian soldier charging towards him until it was too late. Coleman turned swiftly and tried to parry but he already knew that he was too late. He closed his eyes in anticipation for the pain to come. It never came. Blood splattered on his face, causing him to open his eyes. The attacking Galbadian soldier was hunched over, clutching the sword that was buried in his stomach. Standing before that Knight was Biggs with a look of wild anger on his face. He violently shoved the Knight off of his sword then turned to face his squad leader. "Sir, sorry to interrupt you're little engagement but I couldn't swallow the dishonorable nature of that man's actions just now."

Coleman nodded lightly as he was still recovering from his recent battle. "Yes. Thank you for the save Biggs. That Knight did seem rather persistent in attacking me while my back was turned. Yet, in the cruel dance of battle, there are no rules of conduct amongst war-ragged men, save one. Survival."

Suddenly Wedge called over from the other side of the field. "Squad Leader! The battles over! The Knights on this end say that they cannot continue to fight after the fall of their commander!"

Coleman sighed in relief. 'Good, no more death. At least for the

moment.' He raised his head abruptly. "Biggs, I want you and Wedge to make it over to Squad C. Tell Almasy what's going on. Tell him that, no matter what, he's got to warn Squall and Quistis of what's coming their way."

Biggs nodded towards his Squad Leader and gave him a Knights salute. He had seen the previous battle and never before was he so proud of his commanding officer then he was right now. In his eyes, Coleman was a born leader.

Wedge came over to the duo and they traded words. Before long, both men were off on their latest assignment, leaving Coleman sitting there along the field of death. After binding the Galbadian Knights in cords, Nida and Talisar made their way over to their exhausted Leader.

"Is something troubling you sir?" Talisar asked in concern.

Coleman didn't reply for a moment. He simply looked on at the destruction. "War." He said finally. "War spares no one. Whether they be honorable or not, war is about deathâ€¦"

The two Knights said nothing as they stared silently at their leader.

Coleman closed his eyes, silently saying a prayer for all those brave Knights who died on the field. After a moment, he slowly rose to his feet and faced his subordinates. "Well men, we have our orders. We were ordered to stay here and keep watch for approaching units. We'll we've seen the approaching units so now I've got new orders for you. We are now, to advance on the approaching Galbadian contingent we saw earlier. No matter what it takes, we will stop this senseless bloodshed once and for all."

Whew! Ok there goes another chapter. I really got into this one! Lots of fighting and stuff! Took me a while but I'm proud to announce I've completed it. But stay tuned cause theirs more fighting on the way. In the next chapter, It's Squad C's turn to hit the spotlight. Well as always, thanks a bunch for reading and please review!
J

-Cordis

6. Default Chapter Title

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FINAL FANTASY/ ALTERED TALE

CHAPTER 6

**

"We're lost!" Wedge shouted for the fifth time.

Biggs and Wedge had been traveling for two hours now, trying to reach the destination of Squad C. However, somewhere down the line, the two men had lost sight of their bearings and were now mulling around aimlessly.

"Will you shut up!?" Biggs seethed. "We're not lost I tell you. We just took a wrong turn somewhere. You just wait and see! Sooner or later, Squad C will turn up right around the corner."

Wedge let out a mirthless laugh. "HA! Biggs your full of sh&t! We're lost and you know it!"

Biggs was beginning to lose his patience. "I'm telling you we're not lost!"

"And I'm telling you we are!"

"WEÂ€|AREÂ€|NOTÂ€|LOST!!!!"

"Wedge saw were this conversation was leading and simply shrugged his shoulders. "We're lost. We're lost and that's that. I'm going to take a break and rest my legs. Maybe someone who 'ISN'T LOST' will find us."

Biggs was fuming. "Damnit Wedge! How can you take a break when our comrades are in danger!? Get up off your lazy butt and let's go!"

Wedge was unperturbed. "I refuse to go on any trail that may lead me further into isolation." He replied haughtily.

Biggs was about to burst from annoyance when suddenly.

"Are you boys lost or something?" Came an old voice from the distance.

Biggs and Wedge were immediately on their feet scanning the area for any signs of danger, their past squabbles momentarily forgotten.

Slowly an old man walked into the distance. His black skin was weathered by the hot climates of Dollet and he was currently dressed in a green, hooded cloak wearing a simple tunic and leggings underneath. "You boys shouldn't be roaming around aimlessly in these kinds of woods. Don't you know there's a war going on all around you?"

"Who are you?" Biggs yelled cautiously. He unsheathed his sword and Wedge swiftly mimicked his actions.

The old man looked as if he were pondering the answer he would give them. He raised his wrinkled hand up to his chin in thought. "Lets just say I am an old man who has traveled to the right place at the right time."

"What?!?" Wedge blurted, totally confused.

The old man was unheeded. "You are both Knights of Garden correct? I believe the popular term is â€| Seeds â€| right?"

Biggs mouth hung wide open at his correct claim. "What more do you know?" Wedge asked, mystified.

"I know that you are on a mission to reach the other portion of your party. I also know that your time is running short. I could guide you to where you need to go."

"And why should we trust you?" Biggs asked skeptically, breaking out of his trance.

"Because I come, bearing grave news about the Septor of power."

"Septor of wha?"

Wedge stood resolutely. "Biggs I think we should listen to this man. I got a strange feeling about him ya know? Like he's telling the truth and stuff."

Biggs eyed him for a moment then grunted in annoyance. "Whatever, in any case we've got to get to Squad C on the double. If this man knows the way then we have no choice but to follow. Once we get there, we'll let Seifer decide what to do with this old coot."

And thus the trio set off towards their destination once more.

For the first time in his life, Seifer Almasy felt confused. He was currently hunched down on one knee as swords and flesh met all around him. He had just downed his nineteenth victim yet his thoughts were still drawn back on that Galbadian contingent they saw earlier. He constantly debated with himself on whether or not they should risk breaking away from this battle to go to their aid.

Suddenly, one of the Galbadian Knights quickly charged towards him from behind. Seifer caught the flash of steel out of the corner of his eye and in a heartbeat he was back on his feet. In one fluid motion, he drove his sword in then thrust it up, deflecting his victims attack. He then brought it back down, shoving the blade deep into the poor man's neck.

Seifer pulled his sword back while he scanned the battlefield. As it was, They were doing rather good. Unbeknownst to him, this contingent of Galbadian Knights was three times larger then the one that had attacked squad B. Already, Reenkor and Phillips lay dead. However, in return 30 of the 45 Galbadian Knights lay dead at their feet.

Despite the clear signs of victory, Seifer could not banish the troubling thoughts from his mind. Suddenly he saw Jerrard stumble from the vicious attacks of one of the Galbadian Knights. Seifer ran towards him. He didn't particularly care for the man but he was a Knight of Balamb Garden and thus, he was obligated to help any of his

companions in arms.

The Galbadian Knight raised his sword up over Jerrard's head as the Seed continued to stumble about, trying to clear his senses. Seifer rushed forth and plunged his sword into the man's rib cage. Suddenly another Galbadian Knight rushed in for the attack while Seifer was distracted. With an angry shout, Seifer ripped his sword out of his first victim then swung it at the next. Unfortunately for Seifer, the man blocked his attack and yanked his sword down using the momentum. Seifer seethed in rage. The man twisted in a swift circle then brought his sword down on him. Seifer had only one option left.

He tackled the man to the ground before he could strike. As the two men wrestled, Jerrard rose up to his feet and prepared to help then reared back as a blade came slicing down inches from where his neck had been. The random Galbadian Knight rushed him again. Jerrard raised his sword in defense and looked back regretfully towards Seifer and the other Galbadian Knight as the two men continued to wrestle for control.

Seifer twisted on top of the man then bashed him in the face with his armor plated glove. The man spit blood out of his mouth then returned the favor with an upper cut to the jaw. Seifer flew back from the momentum. Unfortunately for Seifer, he was at a disadvantage in strength. The man he had chosen to fight was massively built and extremely tall. Physically, the man was every bit stronger than Seifer in every way. Seifer tried to scramble to his feet and shake off his dizziness at the same time. The man slowly rose to his feet and picked up his sword with an amused smile on his face as he watched Seifer stumble about.

"Next time you should be more careful about who you choose your fights with, little Knight. I am the Commanding Officer of this Battalion of Galbadian Knights. You can't hope to defeat me!"

In response Seifer did the one thing the Galbadian Knight would have least expected. He kicked him square between the legs. The man doubled over in pain as Seifer continued to rigorously shake his head, clearing it of all dizziness.

"Next time you should be more careful about who you choose to fight with. You never know what they might do!" Seifer taunted, then spat in his face.

Meanwhile, Jerrard was still locked in a mortal duel with his Galbadian opponent. The man swung again and Jerrard barely blocked in time. He was a decent fighter but he was nowhere near as good as most Seeds. He pushed the man's sword away then jumped to the side as the man recovered and swung again. Jerrard saw the opening and took it. He swung towards the man's unprotected flank, however the Galbadian Knight deftly avoided the fatal blow. He then twisted to the side and swung in a low arch, effectively disarming Jerrard.

Jerrard fell to the ground and grit his teeth as he prepared for the final blow. Suddenly Carter and Monter came to his aid. Monter rammed his sword into the Galbadian's, while Carter rushed up and drove him through. Jerrard rose slowly to his feet. "Thanks guys!"

"Don't thank us yet?" Carter breathed, eyeing the approaching Galbadian Knights. "We've still got more work to do." Jerrard and

Monter readied their swords for attack.

On another part of the battlefield, a few yards away, Seifer and the Galbadian leader were still locked in a fierce duel. The Galbadian Knight tried to stand up but then Seifer rammed his foot deep into the man's gut. The Knight began to cough violently as Seifer lorded over him in triumph.

"You little shit!" He seethed through grit teeth.

In response, Seifer kicked him again. Then repeated the action over and over again. After the tenth kick the man doubled over and lay on his side, coughing up blood and struggling for air. Panting heavily, Seifer marched over towards his cherished sword and felt comfort as he, once again, raised it up in his hands. He slowly walked over to the man, staring down at him with pity in his eyes.

"It sucks to be you." He said then brought his sword down hard.

At the last minute, The Galbadian blocked the sword thrust with the base of his forearm. Blood and shock struck Seifer all at once.

"What the hell!?" He muttered as he wiped the blood from his face.

"Heh, serves you right." The man gasped as he rose up to his knee's. "You should never leave an enemy to linger. It's always better to just make the kill while you still have the opportunity."

He then grabbed a handful of dirt and sent it flying into Seifer's eyes. Seifer immediately brought his hands back up to his face desperately trying to clear his vision.

"Argh! Damn you! Dishonorable bastard!"

The man chuckled as he finally got up to his feet. "Heh, ever heard the credo; do whatever it takes to win!"

Seifer grit his teeth as he continued to get the dirt out of his eyes. However the Galbadian Commander wasn't about to give him any chances. Without another word, he drove his sword dead center towards Seifer's abdomen.

"Arghhh!!!" Seifer screamed as the blade tore through armor and chainmail and bit into his flesh. He viciously clutched the blade after only part of it entered his skin. The Galbadian was shocked at Seifer's diligence but continued pushing on the sword so that it shoved further into the man's flesh.

A wild roar escaped Seifer's lips and he angrily shot his eyes open, despite the pain. He then raised his other hand and brought it down as hard as he could, breaking the man's sword in half.

"What the hell are you doing!?" The Galbadian blinked.

Seifer couldn't be stopped however. He roughly snatched the embedded halve of the blade out of his side then dashed towards his victim with almost inhuman speed. The man raised his broken sword in defense but Seifer would not be denied. In one swing, he broke through the

man's defense, knocking the sword from his hands. Then he brought his sword the other way in a slashing motion. The man jumped back quickly, avoiding the fatal blow. Seifer was unheeded. He swung his sword to the side then brought it the other way in a swooping motion, cutting the man right behind the knee.

The Knight fell clutching his leg and screaming in agony. He pulled out a concealed dagger but it was too late. Seifer swung again and this time he sent the man's head flying straight off of his shoulders.

The body fell limply to the ground. Seifer viewed it with deep contempt and hatred. Suddenly he stumbled and fell to one knee as his adrenaline wore off and the wound began to take effect. However, thoughts of his mission prevailed fatigue and injury and he quickly yanked himself back up onto his feet. He tried to focus his bleary eyes onto the battle ahead and noticed that it was practically over. There were only two Galbadians left and they were surrendering. Seifer lowered his honor sword and replaced it into his scabbard.

Jerrard ran up to him. "Sir we've successfully repelled the enemy forces!" He replied, excitedly. "We won!"

Seifer simply nodded then proceeded towards one of the captive Galbadian Knights.

"Carter!" He called, panting slightly. "You've got watch. Make sure that we don't get anymore interruptions."

Carter saluted then walked off. Seifer then turned towards their new prisoners.

"You!" He pointed to the Galbadian prisoner closest to him. "Where was that contingent going?"

"What contingent?" The man replied, trying to play dumb.

Seifer angrily pulled out his blade and shoved it dangerously close to the man's neck. "Don't lie to me! Now, I'm only going to ask you one more time. Then I'm going to kill you. It's your choice."

As emphasis, he seeped the sharp end of the blade into the man's throat enough to draw blood. "Where did they go?" He hissed menacingly.

The frightened Galbadian gulped in fear then spoke. "T- they were heading for the tower."

"Why?"

"I don't know why. T- the Sorceress wanted us to connect some device to the tower."

"What device?" Seifer urged.

"I- I don't know. She didn't give us any specifics. It's somehow involved with the X-ATM092. I think the machine is carrying the device! That's all I know, honest!"

Jerrard walked up alongside Seifer. "That machine is powered by GF energy isn't it?"

Seifer nodded sagely. "Yes it is. It seems like that monster serves more than one purpose in this battle. I thought it was only being deployed for added support on the field but it looks like there's a hidden agenda involved. The question now is what does this special 'device' do. And aside from that, who or what is this Sorceress he's talking about."

Jerrard lowered his head in thought. "I've heard rumors about the King of Galbadia taking on a Sorceress as an advisor some years ago. Maybe there's a connection."

Seifer absently tapped his sword on his shoulder, deeply lost in thought. "Maybeâ€¦"

Suddenly footsteps rang out in the distance. "Commander!" Carter yelled from his post as watchman. "It's Biggs and Wedge from Squad C."

Seifer's eyes snapped wide. "Squad C? Send them over!" He hollered.

As they approached, Seifer noticed the third member of their party and narrowed his eyes. "Who's that?" He asked once they came close enough.

Biggs saluted accordingly. "Seeds Biggs and Wedge reporting from Squad B!" He said smartly.

Seifer rolled his eyes in annoyance. "Never mind all that. Just tell me who that man is standing over there."

"Sir he tells us, he's come to warn us about some sort of danger involving a particular Galbadian contingent that's roaming the area." Wedge stated.

Seifer raised an eyebrow. "I figured, you guys would have seen it too."

Wedge looked around at all the dead bodies lying around. "We were attacked as well. Somehow, these Galbadians must have been tipped off on our movements and they've sent in some monster support."

"Yeah yeah yeah, I know that already." Seifer replied exasperated. "So what's all this I'm hearing about danger from that contingent?"

The old man chose that moment to introduce himself. "So you are Seifer Almasy. It's a pleasure to finally meet you again."

Seifer eyed him suspiciously. "I don't believe we've met."

"Not that you can remember no. I am Kiros."

All three Seeds opened their eyes wide in shock at this statement. "Your what?" Seifer asked in astonishment.

Kiros smiled lightly. "Please refrain from going into shock. I am

merely another old man, no different then the rest of you, despite my past actions. What I come forth to tell you now is of the gravest importance however. There is a machine that is in company with the contingent you saw earlier correct?"

Seifer nodded his head, still too astonished to say anything. Kiros regarded him with a soft expression then continued.

"That machine is currently carrying the septor of power. It is concealed inside its center core. The mission of that Galbadian contingent is to make their way up to the very top of the tower. Once there, that machine will align the septor with the Arckon. That must not be accomplished."

"Arckon?" Seifer asked in confusion. "What's that?"

"It is the source of the towers power. It is the key energy that lets communications come back and forth from it. It operates much in the same way as your communicators. Just as the power of GF spirits allow you to communicate back and forth with each other through those small devices, so too does the tower allow communications to come back and forth but on a wider scale. There is talk that at one time the Arckon used to be the strongest Guardian Force ever in existence. After a calamity that happened some thousands of years ago, that Guardian Forced gave up its existence to stop the Calamity. And the Arckon is all that remains of that great Guardian spirit. It is the essence of its existence."

Seifer nodded slowly. "And now this 'Sorceress' wishes to reawaken that great power once again? But for what purpose? What is this special power capable of doing?"

Kiros closed his eyes wearily. He slowly walked up to Seifer until he was standing only inches from the man. "It is best if I simply show you." He whispered, then placed the tips of his fingers upon Seifer's brow.

The Knights eyes opened wide as he saw visions flash through his mind's eye. Visions of destruction and death. Everywhere he looked, he saw massacre and evil. Blood filled the horizons. Seifer let out an agonizing wail as he became lost in the endless cycle of destruction. Then, suddenly everything was back to the way it was, and Kiros was standing a few feet away from him. He stumbled a bit from the experience, then fell down to one knee.

"â€|I â€| I understandâ€|" He replied simply.

Kiros nodded softly then turned and began to walk away.

Jerrard came up to the trio as he watched the old man disappear into the distance. "Who was that guy? What did he do to you Seifer?"

Seifer cupped his head in his hands as he tried to calm his shaking body. "That man," He began slowly. "Was one of the three hero's of the first Sorceress War. I had thought the existence of this Sorceress, the one that everyone's been talking about, was just some myth. Just an added hoax to goad these Galbadian Knights on to victoryâ€| but apparently I was wrongâ€|"

Jerrard put a comforting hand on his leader's shoulder. "Seifer, what did you see?"

Seifer gently raised his head from his hands and looked out into the horizons towards the tower. "I have seen the path of destruction. He has shown me what I must do nowâ€|"

"Sir?"

Seifer rose to his feet slowly, slightly clutching his earlier wound absently. "Jerrard, gather the troops. We leave for the tower. Now!"

Well well well things are starting to heat up for our young seeds. What started out to be a milk run turned out to be a lot more complicated than any of them thought. Can Seifer and his contingent hope to stop the Galbadian forces? What will happen to Squad B? And what's going on with Quistis, Squall and Rinoa? *geeze that sounded like a corny old 1960's Batman episode* anyway, all this will be revealed in the next installment. I hope. Anyway, as always, thanks for reading and please review! J

-Cordis

7. Default Chapter Title

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FINAL FANTASY/ ALTERED TALE

**

CHAPTER 7

Quistis panted heavily as she continued her long trek up the winding stairway. She slowly leaned her back against the wall as she took a break. She couldn't understand her jumbling thoughts. She found herself constantly worrying about Squall. She wasn't going to lie to herself. Seifer was right when he said she had a thing for him. She was definitely attracted to him. However, she had been that way much longer than even Seifer noticed. Only now she was trying to figure out if Squall felt the same way at all. Did she even have a chance with the silent Knight who had so captivated her from the very first day they had met?

Quisits sighed heavily. She wasn't even sure if he was ok or not. She constantly forced herself not to radio him until she had reached the end of her path. She didn't want to feel this way on a mission. She felt that it made her vulnerable and she hated being vulnerable at any time, especially on a mission. It gave her a sense of no longer

being in control of her own actions. But she simply couldn't help herself. There was a deep knot in her heart whenever she thought about Squall. He had been such a huge part of her life for as long as she could remember. So huge that if anything had ever happened to him, she didn't know what she would do.

Slowly images of Squall dying painfully entered her mind. She violently shook her head. _'Stay focused Quistis!_' she told herself sternly. If Squall was in danger then the most she could do was hurry up to the main tower as fast as she could. And that was even assuming if she had chosen the right path. For all she knew, she could be heading towards a dead end.

Heaving another sigh, this time of annoyance at her own paranoia, she pushed herself from the wall and began climbing the stairs once again. Each step was a chore as she continually dragged herself closer and closer to her destination. Her armor felt as if it weighed tons. She reflexively clutched the wall for support. Her armor may have been the most protective out of the whole group but it was also the heaviest.

Slowly she neared an opening a few yards above her. New hope entered her mind and she picked up the pace. It was a long hard trek but finally she reached the opening and realized that it was the top of the tower. She had finally reached her destination.

She brushed an armor plated hand across her brow as she withdrew the communicator from her pouch.

She quickly scanned the area. There were about 20 Knights guarding the post. However, what bothered her most was that they weren't doing anything. They were simply standing there as if they were waiting for something.

Without another thought, she brought the communicator close to her lips. "Squall, this is Quistis. Do you copy, over?" She said silently into the small device.

She covered the receiver as static rang out from the other end. Then Finally Squall's voice filtered through the tiny communicator.

"I copy you loud and clear Commander. What's up?"

Quistis didn't take her eyes off of the Knights as she replied. "It looks like I've struck gold. I found the tower, so I guess you get the dead end of the path. How fast can you meet me here?"

"Actually Commander, sooner then you think. This path leads to the top of the tower as well."

Quistis suppressed her shock as much as she could. "What?! Hmph, well I guess that makes sense. According to legend, the founders of this tower used to house an army here. It would be stupid if they only had one exit from the top."

Suddenly Quistis heard the sounds of another voice on Squall's end. It was surprisingly, female.

"Hey who are you talking to?" She heard the voice ask.

Quistis was sufficiently shocked. "Squall do you have somebody with you?"

She listened intently as she heard the shuffling and noises in the distance. Finally Squall returned to the mic.

"I apologize for that little intrusion Commander. Yes I am with someone else. I found her about halfway up the tower. She seems to be a rebel from Timber. She was captured here and I promised her I would help her find her way out."

Quistis couldn't help the ping of jealousy that suddenly entered her heart. _'Promised her?' _

"Squall, you do remember that this mission is of the utmost importance. Bringing her along could not only get her killed but it could also jeopardize the mission! What were you thinking? Or were you even thinking at all."

Squall's voice was flat and emotionless as he answered her back. "I didn't really have a choice in the matter Commander. If I would have left her alone, chances are she would have been killed. At least this way, she has a better chance of making it out alive."

Quistis wanted to scream, but the ever logical, Squall Lionheart, once again made perfect sense of the situation.

Gritting her teeth, Quistis seethed into the mic. "Fine, then. But she's on your watch not mine. If anything happens to her, I can't help her. My first and foremost duty is to accomplish this mission. Don't think I'll go out of my way to save her over that."

"Understood." Squall said in the same flat voice making Quistis even angrier. "Don't worry, I'll take care of her. She won't be a problem."

The whole way that line came out just sounded totally wrong to her. She was so enraged she wanted to throw her communicator across the room but she forcefully reminded herself of where she was.

She took a moment to collect herself, then spoke again. "How close are you to the top of the tower now?"

"I should be there any second. I see the opening now. Watch for me."

"Affirmative." Quistis said, now suddenly all business.

She closely scanned all sides of the room until her eyes locked on another exit located at the far end. After a few moments she saw a flash of light quickly gleam from that area.

"See me?" Squall asked into the communicator.

"I saw you." Quistis answered. "Ok now here's the plan. This place is a pretty big structure. I count about 20 Galbadian Knights. You see that huge bell? We can't let them ring that or reinforcements will be on our tails in a heartbeat. So this is what we do. You still have Quezolcot right? I want you to synchronize with him. Meanwhile, I'll

synchronize with Shiva. I'll go first and spray the whole area. Whatever I miss, I'm counting on you to hit with Quezolcot. You got it?"

Squall was quiet for a moment. "Commander, are you sure about this? You know how much we get drained by summoning GF's. If we do summon them, afterwards we'll be totally defenseless."

"That's why I'm counting on you to take care of any that I miss. If we do this right, you won't have to worry about a thing. Besides, once we initiate the battle and gain possession of the tower, we can then alert Squad C to our position and tell them to commence the attack."

Again, Squall didn't reply for a moment then his voice rang out over the small device.

"I copy Commander. I'm ready when you are."

"Good. Then start synchronizing. Once I finish my attack, I'll be counting on you to back me up."

"Roger."

Quistis smiled briefly. Despite the disturbing events with this strange new woman Squall had discovered, the mission was going directly as planned. This would be a cakewalk. Now all she had to worry about was Seifer holding up his end of the Job. With no surprise to her, she felt a great deal of worry seep into her mind.

The sun blazed mercilessly on Squad C as they made their way towards the tower. Biggs and Wedge preoccupied themselves with complaining amongst each other. Jerrard furiously brushed his brow every five seconds. Carter and Monter continually chafed under their heated Garden armor. Seifer, however, continued to trudge on as if the heat did not bother him at all. He had completely changed ever since receiving the vision from Kiro's of what was to come. Instead of complaining about the heat as he normally would, his mind was preoccupied with thoughts set only for the X-ATM092 and the threat it posed for the whole world.

The group had been traveling for 15 minutes and still they had seen no sign of the elusive Galbadian armada. After such time, Seifer had decided that the best course of action was just to head towards the tower since that was the destination the contingent was heading towards anyway. However, now, after finally reaching a summit overlooking the tower, the group was beginning to become agitated.

"Where the hell are they?" Jerrard complained, wiping his forehead once more.

Seifer slowly scanned the landscape. "Something's wrong." He muttered. "They should have been here by nowâ€¦"

Just then a troubling thought entered Wedge's mind. "Unlessâ€¦" He hinted.

Seifer immediately got the meaning and quickly snapped to his feet. "Shit! They must already be-

"LOOK!" Cried Biggs, cutting Seifer off in mid-sentence.

They all looked as the outline of the X-ATM092's legs passed by the side of the tower.

"That's it." Seifer grunted angrily. "Knights, we move in now!"

He then, unsheathed his sword and charged down the bluff towards the tower. The other Seeds quickly followed his lead and ran down after him.

Seifer was in full sprint. He reached the tower in a heartbeat. Not stopping, he made a sharp turn then headed straight for the main doors to the tower. He stopped abruptly when he saw the huge Galbadian army waiting for him at the front.

"Heh heh heh, Going some where?" One of the Galbadian's asked with a huge grin on his face.

Soon the other Seeds met up with him and were equally shocked when they noticed their plight.

"It was a damned set up!" Seifer seethed.

"Bingo! You guessed it!" Laughed the same Galbadian. "Your prize is a quick death. We have explicit orders not to let anyone pass through these gates. And if they were Seeds, our orders are to eliminate them by all costs."

Seifer narrowed his eyes angrily and grit his teeth. "Bastards!" he hissed.

"Oh come on, why don't you all just give up? I mean look at us! You're grossly outnumbered."

Seifer had to grudgingly agree about that. As he looked forth towards his enemies, they had to have had at least 200 Knights in all. Suddenly, images of Kiros vision entered his mind and he clutched his sword tightly.

"You've lost, Seeds." The man yelled.

"No!" Seifer said silently. "No matter what! I will not allow that vision to come to pass! Even if I have to fight you with my last dying breath, I won't give up! I WON'T SURRENDER!"

Seifer was shocked, when suddenly all the Seeds behind him roared in agreement.

The Galbadian clenched his fists furiously. "You will all die!"

"NOT JUST YET!" Cried a voice in the, not too far, distance. Seifer swung his head around to see the familiar form of Coleman and the rest of Squad B.

"SQUAD LEADER!" Biggs and Wedge screamed together in glee. All the

other Seeds cheered as Squad B approached the group.

"What took you so long?" Seifer grumbled.

"It's good to see you too, Seifer. I saw you guys were unfairly matched here and well I thought we might try and even the odds a bit."

Seifer let out a shrewd laugh. "Yeah a lotta good that does us! Now more people are gonna die."

Seifer glanced towards Coleman with intensity in his eyes. "You can still turn back. We can hold them off at least until you get away. At least then, we all don't die."

Coleman met his gaze evenly. "I heard you're speech back there. Whatever premonitions you got, they must have had a strong impact on you. I've never known you to be so completely focused before Seifer, much less ready to die. The way I see it, if 'you're' ready to die over this, then it must be worth dying for."

"Colemanâ€|"

"Besides, You remember our motto! Seeds are obliged never to leave other Seeds in the brink of danger."

Seifer nodded his head slowly. "We can't let that X-ATM092 reach the top of the tower. I can't explain but just know that if it does, then that means the end for us all."

Coleman gave a mirthless smile. "Well, I guess we better put that thing out of commission then huh?"

The Galbadian had had enough of their conversation. "Enough with the babbling already! Knights you have your orders! Attack! In the name of our Sorceress!"

Seifer clenched his teeth. "No more time left. Let's get to it!"

"Indeed." Coleman replied, then drew his sword, quite possibly, for the last time.

Wow! Things are drawing to a close as our hero's face off in the ultimate battle which decides all! The end is at hand but for who? Please keep reading to find out. As always thanks for reading and please review! J

-Cordis

8. Default Chapter Title

> <meta name="Generator"> Disclaimer: All Final Fantasy 8 characters, places and things all belong to Squaresoft and other involved companies

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I make no money from it.

**

FINAL FANTASY/ ALTERED TALE

**

CHAPTER 8

Squall's eyes focused in anticipation as he waited for the inevitable. He didn't totally agree with Quistis plan to use GF's as an initial attack. It would make them vulnerable in battle and it would leave too wide of a margin for error. However, he would not argue the point. He had his orders and he would act accordingly. Thus, Squall continued to watch diligently with unwavering eyes.

Suddenly, a loud voice rang out over the whole room. "SHIVA!"

A huge white mist began to evolve around the center of the room, right where the Galbadian Knights were standing. The poor souls scattered in confusion as the white mist began to form the solid shapes of icicles. Suddenly the ground burst open, and a huge ice shard protruded from its center. Inside the ice casing, a gigantic, incredibly beautiful, woman began to stir to life. With the force of a demon, she burst through her ice prison revealing herself to the victims below. Some of the Knights watched in awe. Others ran for their lives. A certain few, simply charged in to attack the apparition. However, all these actions were to no avail as the Guardian of Ice brought forth her arm and waved it across them. Within a heartbeat, ice engulfed them all. Horrendous screaming could be heard as warm flesh slowly surrendered to the whims of the oppressive ice storm. Then, suddenly the ice shattered, scattering their frozen remains all across the room.

Once her work was finished, Shiva disappeared back into the realm of Guardian forces, leaving only death and destruction in her wake. Immediately, Squall saw Quistis form go limp from the exertion. Now, with nothing holding him back, He ran towards his exhausted Commander. Rinoa followed closely on his heels.

"Commander, are you ok?" Squall asked plainly.

Quistis looked up into Squall's eyes searching for some trace of worry, or even possibly love? Unfortunately, she only found cold unfeeling eyes staring back at her. Her heart sank some as she finally answered.

"I'm fine. Just a little tired that's all."

Squall nodded briskly. "Good, it seems like you got them all. Good work Commander. What are your next orders."

Quistis knitted her brow as she tried to collect her scrambled thoughts. The summoning had jumbled her mind more than she realized.

"D-disable the bell. We don't want it going off and alerting the others. Once that is accomplished we'll radio Seifer and tell him to

start his run. He should be happy to hear that."

Squall nodded and proceeded towards the Huge, dome-like bell that could cause so much trouble for them all. However, upon reaching itâ€|

"Wait!"

Squall turned swiftly to see the form of a Galbadian Knight slowly rising to his feet. Squall drew his sword and held it at the ready. Rinoa swiftly ran to his side, preparing to fight next to him.

The man clutched the walls for support. "Y- you will never beat our Sorceressâ€| I call upon the power that she has bestowed upon meâ€|â€|. Diablo! Awaken to my call!"

Thus, with the last of his strength, the Galbadian had summoned the barely contained Diablo, who he had imprisoned inside an orb like ball. He rammed the ball hard onto the stone floor, then fell lifelessly to the ground.

Black ooze seeped from out of the orb, then slowly took form until it had grown into a huge beast, much larger than all of them combined. The monster thrust its head back, screaming as huge black and red striped wings ripped from its back and flapped strongly in the wind.

Squall took a step back as he reeled from the force of its massive wings. Rinoa similarly, backed away.

"Squall! That's Diablo!" She said with amazement in her voice. "He has been dormant for years. The last owner who junctioned him, went mad because Diablo wouldn't consent to being welded by anyone. He is, by far, one of the most vicious Guardian Forces you could ever run into."

Squall had listened closely to this speech, but glanced at Rinoa in annoyance when she stopped talking. "Andâ€|? What are its weaknesses?"

Rinoa's face turned beat red and she gulped nervously. "Wellâ€| uhhâ€| heh heh heh, nobody ever mentioned any to the best of my knowledgeâ€| heh heh hehâ€|"

Squall's shoulders dropped in exaggeration.

"Holy." Quistis voice rang out from the other side of the room. "He's weak against light attacks."

Squall gave a crisp nod then thrust his fingers to his head. The monster roared over him and prepared to strike however suddenly Rinoa yelled out "BARRIER" and protected both of them from the creature's onslaught of physical attacks. She then pointed towards Squall with deep concentration etched on her face. "TRIPLE" She called out again.

Squall was momentarily shocked. He felt a wave of energy surge into his body making his magic three times more powerful than it actually was. Squall quickly removed his fingers from his forehead and thrust them towards the Floating GF. "HOLY!" Squall cried and suddenly a

bright, blinding light engulfed the Demon. Rinoa winked as the sounds of the creature's screams rang out around the room.

Squall saw his opening and rushed towards the monster with his Lionheart sword. He slashed furiously at its face yet the monster blocked the attack with its claws. It viciously tore at Squall trying to break through his magic barrier. After a few tries, it venomously slammed Squall to the side with its claws. He soared in the air and crashed painfully into the tower wall, then fell unmoving onto the stone floor.

"Oh no!" Rinoa screamed in agony. The monster prepared another attack for the unconscious man, however a cord quickly wound itself around the demon's neck.

"How's that for improvisation?" Quistis asked smartly, as she yanked on the cord, drawing the creature further away from Squall. Diablo roared in outrage at the humiliation, then forcefully ripped itself free of the bindings and turned to face her.

The young Battalion Commander was ready to face this menace as she unsheathed her sword and attacked it savagely. However, still weakened from her earlier attack, her hits were only half hearted. Diablo roared in triumphant laughter as he swooped around her blows then got in close enough and sliced through the side of her armor with its talon claws. Quistis swiftly jumped back far enough so that the blades didn't penetrate any further then the protective shell. She quickly sprinted towards him again and impaled him in the thigh with her sword. Diablo was not at all pleased with this and forcefully knocked her back with the end of its hand, sending her reeling across the room.

The air began to get cold and then a dozen Ice shards slowly materialized from thin air and impaled Diablo from all angles. He roared in fury at these meddlesome mortals and their childish antics. He trained his eyes on Rinoa and blazed towards her. Rinoa was mesmerised by the intense size of the beast and simply closed her eyes as it approached her. Suddenly, a tall force came in between them.

"QUEZOLCOT!" Squall yelled as Diablo reared in close enough to him and Rinoa. Electricity sparked the room and huge thunderclouds formed above. Diablo panicked slightly as he recognized the presence of one of his brothers. Soon he was surrounded in a huge dome. The center blazed brightly and bursting forth at the speed of light, Quezolcot immersed and thrust his wings boldly as he faced off with Diablo. The Guardian Force of darkness sped towards the electric entity but was too late. Quezolcot, beat his wings faster and soared higher into the air. Then with a momentous surge of power, a huge comet sized meteor struck the ground below, ramming right into Diablo. He screamed from the intensity of the blast.

Squall fell to his knees from exhaustion, hoping that was it. However, when the light cleared and the dust died down, Squall realized that he couldn't have been more wrong in his entire life.

Flesh and bone met steel in the relentless battle for life and death.

This was not a battle of odds or spoils but a battle of sacrifice. The Seeds knew that they could not win this battle but surged on with the belief that they could at least stop an event that could change the world forever. To the Knights of Balamb Garden, that was more than enough to spur them on to fighting at their best and giving their all. The battle raged on and each Knight continued to fight with a will of iron, struggling to pave a brighter future for the world.

Seifer charged forth into a group of Knights then spun into a swift 360 degrees turn, killing two of the five men surrounding him. The other three charged in, however, Seifer wasn't done yet. He blocked the strike of the first attacker then quickly ran to the side as another Knight tried to drive him through. Instead, the man accidentally impaled the Knight whom Seifer had been blocking against. As the second Knight stood in shock from his mistake, Seifer drove his sword through the man's back up to his heart. With a vicious yank, he pulled his sword free and challenged the remaining Knight. This last opponent didn't seem too eager to fight the demon in which Seifer had become. Yet, he charged in at the last minute out of desperation. Seifer parried his attack easily then swung around to his unguarded flank and slid the sharp end of his sword through the man's intestines. Seifer pried his sword free, then searched with wild eyes for the next victim that would feel the sting of his blade.

Coleman, was hard pressed as he locked swords with the head Galbadian Knight. Already he had to avoid several different side attacks from other Galbadian Knights that wished to help their commander. But in the end, Coleman defeated them all, while still at the same time, holding his own with the Galbadian Commander. He had never been so exhausted in his life, yet at the same time, never before had he ever felt so invigorating; never before had he ever felt more alive than he did now.

He swung swiftly at the opening the Galbadian made for himself. A slight smile crept up to his face when his sword met flesh. The Galbadian Knight clutched his arm and screamed wildly as he charged in, preparing for another attack. Coleman dodged easily. This man was nowhere near as good as the other Knight Commander he had dueled with. He found himself slightly disappointed at this revelation. Coleman swung down hard, yet the man quickly scrambled away before he was decapitated. He pushed himself up on his heels and faced off with Coleman once more, panting heavily and clutching his sword tightly in front of him.

Coleman looked at the man with pity in his eyes. "It must be sad to know that you are going to die and you can do nothing about it."

"Shut up!" The Galbadian said. "What about you huh? You will all die! You didn't think you had a chance of actually winning did you? You will die miserably!"

Coleman closed his eyes lightly. "The difference between men like you and I is that in the face of death, men like me can accept it as long as we know there is meaning behind it. However, men like you cannot bear the burden of death because of the foul actions you have committed in life! Justice is cruel is it not?"

At that very moment, the Galbadian's eyes became wild and he savagely rushed in for another attack. It had been the sloppiest attack Coleman had ever seen in his life. He easily ducked low, avoiding the man's overhead strike, then drove his sword forth, embedding it deep into the Galbadian's heart.

The man cringed his face in a look of absolute horror and insane rage. But he was not done yet. He quickly reached into his back pouch revealing a dagger. Before Coleman could act, he swiftly shoved it into the Balamb Knights side, right below the rib cage. Coleman grunted in pain the glared at the man who didn't know when to die.

"Bastard!" He seethed. "You chose even to die like a coward!?" Without another thought, Coleman ripped his sword out of the man's chest with lightning speed, then swung it down hard, splitting the man's head vertically in half.

Coleman turned his face away from the disgusting scene in front of him, not wanting to look at this dishonorable filth that had done him the disgrace of facing off with him. He absently yanked his sword then began wiping it clean of the filthy blood that smeared his blade. Suddenly another Galbadian rushed up on him.

Biggs quickly sped in and rammed his sword into the man with such intensity that it caused him and his opponent both to fall over. Biggs quickly got to his feet and pulled his sword out of the man. "Squad Leader, ya gotta keep eyes open sir."

Coleman smiled weakly at Biggs. "Thanks, I'll keep that in mind." Coleman then rose to his feet, ignoring his wound and strode across the battlefield for his next victim.

Biggs watched his Squad Leader walk off then quickly dodged out of the way as another Galbadian tried to attack him. Biggs swung but his blow was parried. He struck again but the man blocked again then thrust and shoved his sword right into his shoulder. Biggs cried out in alarm and fell to his knees. The Galbadian pulled his sword out of him and prepared for another attack.

Then suddenly he jumped to the side as Wedge came charging in. Wedge swung as viciously and wildly as he could. Although they would never admit it, Biggs and Wedge were the best of friends and they would never let the other die without them at least trying to do something for the other. The Galbadian Knight blocked as best as he could but he could not guard against the rain of attacks Wedge pummeled him with. Finally the man's sword gave in and broke before him. Wedge did not waste a second. The last swing came and the man's lifeless body fell heavily to the ground.

Biggs looked at his friend with a wry smile. "What took you so long?" He said, still clutching his wound.

Wedge shot him an annoyed look. "Get up! We still got lots of people to kill and not enough time to do it in."

Monter danced through the haze of Galbadian Knights killing one after the other. He dodged right, avoiding a fatal blow, then swung vertically, killing his victim. Another Galbadian charged towards him and Monter twisted left then thrust forth impaling the second man.

However he didn't see the other Galbadian charging towards him from behind. He spun swiftly but fell back as he was pushed out of the way.

"PHILLIPS!" He cried in shock and alarm as the other man selflessly took the blade for him and was cut through his heart. The Galbadian too, seemed slightly shocked at the turn of events and hesitantly removed his sword from the man's flesh. Monter shot up to his feet and rammed his sword as hard as he could into the man's throat. He then walked over to Phillips prone form. But then suddenly he felt the sting of another sword entering his spine. He cried out in alarm as he clutched at the blade but stopped as another Galbadian charged in on him, impaling him through the chest. He coughed up blood and grit his teeth through the pain. "You Bastards!!" He seethed but then a third Galbadian ran him in, right through the rib cage. More blood spurted from his mouth and his eyes slowly began to cloud over in death. He vaguely noticed the forms of three others rushing in and similarly shoving their blades into him. Yet it didn't hurt anymore. He couldn't feel anything. All he could feel was the welcoming blanket of darkness as death came in to seize him.

Jerrard saw the brutal death of Monter and Phillips but shut his eyes against the pain and finished off his latest opponent. He felt rage seep into his heart and scanned the area for anyone else to attack. Eventually, his eyes fell on the departing form of the X-ATM092. His eyes shot wide opened and he hollered at the top of his lungs.

"THE MACHINE IS GETTING AWAY!"

Seifer's head shot up immediately at the sound. He yanked his sword out of a, now dead, Galbadian and ran as fast as he could towards Jerrard, occasionally stopping to swiftly kill any Galbadian Knights that tried to get in his way.

Jerrard saw that the others were too hard pressed to make it in time. He shut his eyes tightly. _'If that machine gets to the tower everyone would have died for nothing. This battle would be pointless and the world would suffer for our failure!_' _Wildly, Jerrard snapped his eyes back open and charged towards the machine at full speed.

"BASTARD!" He screamed as he jumped onto one of the legs and shoved his sword into the circuitry. The machine spun wildly trying to rid itself of its unwelcome guest but Jerrard clung on for dear life. Suddenly a huge cylindrical object shot up from its back and a red laser shot out from the opening. Jerrard's eyes opened wide as the beam seeped straight through his heart. His hands weakened and his eyes began to cloud over but suddenly a burst of rage filled him. He would not give up. He would not surrender to death just yet. He summoned forth triple on himself. The strain further weakened him but pure determination kept his adrenaline pumping. He then cast Thunderaga on the huge machine and shook violently as they both burst into a blaze of white light while thunder continuously struck them both.

Seifer saw the light as he approached and ran even faster. "NO! JERRARD! WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?!"

He ran up to the X-ATM092 just in time to see the machine wobble

violently then balance itself at the last minute. Completely drained from the last attack, Jerrard fell limply from the leg he had perched himself on. Without another thought, the machine rammed the point of its leg through the already, dying Seed, crushing his internal organs and severing his upper torso from the lower half of his body.

Seifer was horrified at the scene playing out before his eyes. Blood slapped his face as the machine continued its violent attack. "Godâ€¦" Seifer said in horror as the machine finally removed its leg.

Only the maimed pieces of what used to be a Knight, remained. The machine turned to face Seifer then after a split second it shifted back the other way and resumed its trek. Parts of its hull sparked violently as it moved on. The thunder had apparently damaged some of its internal functions critically. Seifer quickly ran to the remains of Jerrard and wrenched his eyes shut tightly.

"Whyâ€¦" He whispered. "You stupid idiotâ€¦ You should have waited for meâ€¦"

Seifer slowly rose to his feet then gave the heroic man a Knight's salute. "Rest in peace, brave Knight."

Rage rose up in Seifer and he shot his head back towards the X-ATM092. "COME BACK HERE YOU BASTARD! STAND AND FIGHT, COWARD!!!"

Seifer thrust his right arm out and summoned forth the fire raging within him.

"IFRIT!!!!!!" He screamed and immediately a huge gout of fire burst forth out of the ground right in front of the X-ATM092.

Ifrit tore from the ground, roaring violently as if he could feel the pain, anger and rage welling up in Seifer's heart. The ground rumbled again and then a huge crater followed Ifrit and carried him up into the air. With the rage of a demon, Ifrit charged up his huge ball of destruction and raised it high over his head. Then, with another roar, Ifrit sent the meteor flying straight towards the X-ATM092.

The Ground exploded, shaking with wild eruptions as the meteor embedded itself into the X-ATM092, carving its way forth into the ground. Fire exploded everywhere and many of the Galbadians were caught up in the explosions.

Coleman ran up as Seifer fell to the ground, totally spent from his last attack.

"Almasy! Are you alright?" He asked.

Seifer glanced up at him weakly then gave him one of his infamous grins. "Mission accomplishedâ€¦ Now we dieâ€¦"

Coleman nodded his head thoughtfully.

Suddenly the ground burst forth again and out came the X-ATM092. It was extremely battered and ruined however it still functioned. It

slowly dragged itself out of the huge hole it was buried in and made its way towards the tower.

Seifer's hands clenched in anger. He slowly, and painstakingly pulled himself to his feet. "Damn!" He seethed as he watched the machine go off into the tower entrance. He started in the direction to follow it, then stopped himself and looked back at his companions. He couldn't leave them behind. A firm hand clutched his shoulder.

"Go after it." Coleman spoke softly.

"What? I can't! You all are fighting a dying battle here. By my honor, I can't leave you." Seifer argued.

"And we will have all died in vain if that monstrosity reaches the top of the tower. Look Seifer, everyone else is either dead or too deep in the fight to stop that monster. Only you can stop it now."

"But my honor!" Seifer regarded Coleman with an almost desperate look in his eyes. Seifer had always prided himself on image. What he was to do now will have violated all that that image stood for.

"Put aside your façade for once Almasy." Coleman said silently. "Put aside your image and do what you know is right. Stop this machine Seifer. That is your true path to righteousness. Give up the code for one moment and change destiny."

Seifer closed his eyes. He knew that only humiliation awaited him if he chose to follow the path to righteousness.

"Seifer!" Coleman clutched both his shoulders forcing the man to face him. "You must ensure that Jerrard didn't die for nothing! I'll keep the party going down here. I'll keep them off your back but you Seifer! You have a job to do! For the world! For everyone's future! You must stop the bloodshed."

Seifer was quiet for a moment. Again the images of the dreaded future entered him mind and he suddenly knew the choice he had to make. Slowly, he nodded his head.

"Fine!" I'll stop that damned monster, even if I have to do it with my last dying breath, I'll stop it."

Coleman gave him a warm smile and the two men gripped hands in a sign of respect for each other. "I never used to think much of you before Almasy, but now I see a new side of you." Coleman said boldly. "You're one of the finest Knights I've ever had the pleasure of serving with. I'm proud to have known you."

Seifer smiled. "Likewise Coleman. I never understood why you never got rank. You're an inspiration to Balamb Knights everywhere. May you forever be remembered in the Code of Knights for you're unwavering honor and bravery."

Seifer was silently shocked at this huge praise he had just given the man. It was totally out of character for him. However, a lot of things he was doing now were out of character for him. He silently laughed to himself when he came to the realization that, at this point, he really didn't care anymore.

"I'll see you soon in the next life." Seifer said to Coleman with a smile. Coleman returned the smile and gave him the Knights salute. Seifer did likewise then turned smartly and ran off towards the X-ATM092.

Coleman spun around to find that the Galbadians where heading straight for them, intent on thwarting their task. Coleman flashed his blade in the bright sunlight as he prepared for battle once more.

"Well boys, nice of you to save me the trouble of having to come to you. Let's dance!"

Seifer ran as fast as he could up the stairs of the tower as he saw the retreating for of the X-ATM092. He was still incredibly exhausted from summoning Ifrit, yet Seifer forcefully pushed aside his fatigue and cast haste on himself. He felt his muscles slacken more from exertion but at the same time the burst of speed hit him hard. He ran at full tilt towards the X-ATM092 and leapt up onto its back. The only think keeping him going now was his anger and rage at what this monster of chaos served to accomplish.

"HOW DARE YOU!" Seifer seethed at the machine as he pulled out his sacred sword and plunged it into the monster's back. Five cylindrical cones came up out of its back just like they did with Jerrard. However, nothing would stop Seifer now. He swung his sword to the side, severing two of the cannons from their posts. The other three shot at him. He dodged two of them deftly however the last ray burned straight through his shoulder. Seifer blocked out the pain and continued to attack. He slashed at the other two beam cannons then drove his sword deep into the last one. Seifer ranted more as he quickly attacked the center of the machines back.

"YOU DARE TURN YOUR BACK ON ME?!?"

With all his might, he rammed his sword deep into the armored hide of its back and pulled the casing off to reveal tones of GF powered circuitry beneath. He eagerly plunged his sword in, relentlessly ripping the inner organs of the machine apart. He continued to repeat this as he raved on in a wild insane rage.

"ARE
YOUâ€| "

**

CLUNTCH

**

"â€|OUTâ€| "

**

CRUNCH

**

"â€|OFâ€| "

**

SLASH

**

"â€|YOURâ€| "

**

RIPP

**

"â€|DAMNâ€| "

**

CLUNTCH

**

"â€|MIND!!!!!!!!!"

**

RRRRRRRIIPPPPPPP

**

The last strike ripped through the inner fibers of the machines systems revealing a strange object underneath. Seifer plunged his sword further.

"Where is it?" he hissed as he continuously chopped at its core.
"Where is the damn Septor at you Bastard!"

Unbeknownst to Seifer, the X-ATM092 activated its emergency systems. Huge blades shot out along its back. Two more cannons zipped out from the farther end and fired at Him.

"Arrghhh!!!!" Seifer cried in pain as the rays seared through him. One ripped through his ribs and another tore through the right side of his chest. Blood shot from his mouth as he continued to tear away at the hated machine with his honor sword.

"Is that all you got?" He screamed. He stuck harder and this time he felt his sword hit against something more solid. He looked down and saw it. The bright light emanating from the object of his desires. The Septor of Power. "There!" he whispered with an almost hungry ting to his voice. The blades quickly shot up. One ripped through his side, mulching what was left of the right side of his already shattered rib cage. He screamed out in rage through the haze of pain and rose up over the machine. He held his sword high as he prepared to strike. The beam cannon fired again, cleaving a hole through the center of his torso. He gritted his teeth. The pain didn't matter

anymore. Death didn't matter anymore. _'This is it!â€|'_ he thought to himself. _'After this I can finally restâ€|'_

With the force of a demon, he drove his sword home into the Septor with all of his might.

**

CRACK!!

**

At the same time, the beam cannon fired one last time, tearing yet another hole through his chest. Seifer collapsed on to its back, now completely spent of all reserves. His eyes seeped open slightly and he saw it. His blade had struck the Septor. It had cracked the center of the crystal. But to his misfortune, it still shined brightly. _'I failedâ€|'_ was the last thought that drifted through Seifer's wavering conscience as darkness overtook him.

Well things are finally drawing to a close to the Dollet Saga. I know this chapter may have been kinda intense but I hope you all will continue reading. There's more to come! As always, thanks for reading, and please Review! J

-Cordis

9. Default Chapter Title

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FINAL FANTASY/ ALTERED TALE

**

CHAPTER 9

Squall couldn't believe his eyes. Even after a direct attack from Quezolcot, Diablo still wouldn't fall. He was completely drained. Diablo flew towards him in an angry rage. Squall closed his eyes slowly. _'Nothing to do now but wait for the end.'_

"ALEXANDER!"

Squall's eyes snapped open in surprise. Neither he nor Quistis had the Alexander GF. That could only meanâ€|

"Rinoa!" Squall screamed as he swung his head in her direction. Alexander burst forth from the ground then opened his armada of missiles and fired them relentlessly at Diablo. The Guardian of

darkness reeled back from the incredible pain that attacked him. The intensity of the blasts was not what weakened him. It was the strength of the light emanating from it. Once Alexander was done, he slowly disappeared into the distance leaving Rinoa standing in his place. She staggered slightly but held her ground.

Diablo was still reeling from the attack and seething with anger. He glared viciously at Rinoa. He thrust his wings hard and flew to her with lightning speed. However, Rinoa saw his attack coming and leapt to the side as huge gravel and stone crumbled under his merciless attack.

Squall was shocked. He forcefully rose himself to his feet. _'How can she stand after summoning a GF?' _he pondered. He violently shook his head. _'Can't worry about that now! If we don't stop this monster, we're done for.' _

--

With all the energy Squall had, he charged towards the demon and swung his sword hard on its tail. Diablo reared in pain and anger then thrashed its claws at Squall.

He jumped back at the last minute, avoiding the vicious claws. Unfortunately he was still weak and stumbled to one knee. Diablo struck again, this time with more intensity. Squall tried to dodge again but unfortunately, he didn't have the energy to stand. He grit his teeth, feeling the sting of sharp talons as they ripped through armor, clothing, then flesh, while the momentum hoisted him into the air. Squall flew back from the attack and slammed against the wall hard. He tried to rise to his feet but only fell back down from sheer pain.

Diablo flew over to him and sneered. He threw his hands up into the air and almost immediately a black mist began to form at the base of his palm. Slowly, the mist grew larger and wider. Huge volts of electricity began to swarm around it until it became larger than even him.

Rinoa gaped at the huge orb flying over Squall. Without thinking, she sprinted over to the fallen Knight and stood in front of him.

"TRIPLE! BARRIER!" She screamed in succession. Swiftly, a shield formed around her and Squall then reinforced itself three times over. Diablo was unheeded and threw the glowing black orb at them. Rinoa called upon her magic once more. Her muscles were beginning to strain and her body was slowly breaking down. The threshold for mages was high when it came to using magic but she had already gone overboard after the last two spells. However, she would not give up. Forcefully, she summoned the last spell, draining all of her remaining strength.

"DEFLECT!"

The energy ball hit them full force. Rinoa's spell was not powerful enough to deflect the huge energy ball however it was able to repel some of its strength. The rest of the energy hit them hard, even breaking through the barriers she had set up. She screamed in pain as the energy slowly began to eat away at her. The sheer force of the

blast sent them flying across the room and slamming into the opposite ends of the wall.

Rinoa was out cold, lying motionless on the ground. Squall saw Rinoa's unmoving body and his eyes filled with rage. He had pledged to keep her safe. He would not let her die now. He struggled with intense pain but finally rose up to his feet. Diablo was on him in a heartbeat. He jumped back as the Guardian Force continued to attack him relentlessly with its claws. Squall drew his sword out and began to block the attacks he couldn't dodge. Squall had to think fast. His adrenaline rush was quickly running out and his wounds weren't making things any easier.

After the next attack, Squall used his sword to break in then drove it dead center into Diablo's chest. The demon screamed then punched Squall dead center in the face with all its might. Squall shot back through the air like a meteor and rammed hard into the wall yet again. Squall coughed up a sea of blood and bile as he tried to stand, then fell flat on his face. Diablo viciously ripped the sword from its heart and flung it to the ground. He was now totally pissed off. These mere humans had hurt him so. It was unthinkable. He would destroy the man with the sword first. Then he would finish off the mage girl. And finally he would kill the blond-headed one.

He stood at full height in front of Squall's unmoving form. He raised his hand for another attack when suddenlyâ€|

"SHIVA!"

Diablo was astonished. These humans had more fight in them than he had anticipated.

Coleman swung with all of his might as he severed the head of yet another Galbadian Knight. He was panting heavily and sweat rained down from his whole body. He looked on toward the bloody battlefield and saw all the maimed figures before him. _'Such a waste.'_ He thought to himself morbidly. He hated blood. He hated death. And most of all, he hated killing. But now he had no choice but to kill. If he didn't, many more lives would be lost and an even bleaker future would await the world.

With a wild shout, He charged towards another Galbadian Knight and drove his sword through the man's chest. Blood splashed on his face and the man sank to the ground. Coleman stood over his dead body for a moment, contemplating his actions. "Kill to end all killingâ€|" He muttered to himself, sullenly.

A shout rang out and brought Coleman back to reality. Nida was fiercely locked into a life or death struggle. Nida charged forth towards his opponent and swung hard but missed as the man deftly moved out of the way. He clenched his teeth and swung horizontally. The man dodged yet again and then came in close through Nida's defenses. He tried to recover but it was too late as the Galbadian thrust forth striking him in the head with his blade. Nida's eyes opened wide as blood seeped from his head, matting his hair red. He crumbled to the ground. The Galbadian stood over him and prepared to sever his head as a trophy. Quickly, Coleman shot in and rammed into the man with the force of his shoulder armor. The Knight crashed to

the ground but almost immediately shot back up.

"You wish to fight me?" The man raved, obviously insane.

Coleman drew his sword forth. "If a man cannot thing clearly with his own God given facilities, then he is not fit to live."

The man roared in rage then attacked him. Coleman easily dodged the attack but fatigue continued to gnaw at his reflexes. The man struck again and again Coleman weaved. Coleman then opened up with his own attack and jammed his sword right up under the man's arm. He screamed wildly then noticed Coleman's old wound. He desperately jabbed his fingers into it. Coleman hollered in shock as he removed his sword from inside the man's flesh. Blood foamed up in the Galbadian's mouth as he charged head on towards the still recovering Knight. He swung his sword hard cutting Coleman deep across the chest. Coleman hollered in pain but determination ruled all senses. He clutched his sword with sweaty fingers and drove it through the Galbadian's throat. They both fell to the ground limply.

Coleman stirred then shoved his blade into the dirt as he used it to hoist him up to his knees. He scanned the battlegrounds and noticed that Biggs and Wedge were nowhere in sight. He closed his eyes as realization hit him. They had fallen already. He looked up at all the eager Galbadian faces smiling cruelly at him. Their swords hungered for him blood. Coleman sighed heavily and smiled in the face of death. For he saw something much brighter waiting for him in the distance. _'Soon I won't have to worry about all the killing anymore. Soon I'll be freeâ€|'_ _

--

The Galbadians walked in closer for the kill.

--

'Just pleaseâ€| One more timeâ€| Wait for me brother. I have one thing left to doâ€|'

--

Some of them leapt at him in rage and bloodlust. Coleman didn't stop them as their swords tore into his flesh and ripped through his internal organs.

"Just a bit more blood to spillâ€|" He whispered into the breeze while darkness began to wash over him.

More pain came to him and more swords ripped at his body. Silently he closed his eyes and held his arms out.

"ULTIMA!" He screamed with the last of his dying breath.

The whole area erupted in a vicious explosion. The Galbadian's screamed as they were all engulfed in the raging inferno of destructive energy. From this attack, nothing would remain and slowly, death swallowed them all.

--

'Brotherâ€¦I'm ready nowâ€¦|.'

—

— —

Diablo couldn't believe it. The insolence of these mortals was beyond belief. Yet all of this was drowned out by the sounds of his own ensuing screams of agony. Shiva had done her worst on him. He felt the sting of her ice as she embedded it deep within him. Once the attack was over with, he crumbled to the ground.

Quistis stood in the distance. It was beyond belief that any Knights could pull off a summon spell twice. To do so meant death. Yet at the sight of Squall's suffering, she found the energy inside her to summon the Guardian once more. However the price was great. She fell hard onto the ground. She couldn't move. She felt so weak. She could hardly breath. She raised her eyes up to the demon. Even that took great effort on her part.

Diablo felt his suffering. He felt the pain all through his whole body as he lay there on the cold stone floor. However, he wasn't done yet. He clutched the pavement as he pushed himself back up onto his feet and approached the trio once more. He took slow measured steps towards the unmoving form of Quistis. He would kill this woman who had hurt him so. He raised his claws over her head to strike. It would all be over for her. He saw her fear stricken eyes on him. This only amused him and made the lust for her death even more pleasurable for him.

His claws glistened in the light, then brought them down hard.

SLICE

He stopped in mid-swing and looked down towards his abdomen. Protruding through the front end, was the tip of Squalls sword dripping with his blood. He roared out in agony and clutched at the blade but found he had no more strength left.

Shaking violently from overexertion, Squall removed his sword from the Guardian Forces flesh. Diablo fell to his knees before him. His head was low from shame as he suffered the guilt of losing to a human. "Finish meâ€¦|" He said silently. "You and your group have fought valiantly and now I am defeated. Do me the honor of killing me now."

Squall's eyes were unwavering. He raised his sword then trust it forth in lighting speed.

CLUNTCH

Diablo's eyes napped open as he realized he was still alive. "What are you doing mortal! Kill me now!"

Squall still kept his cold eyes on him. "Noâ€¦|" He replied slowly. "I don't want to. You are powerful and it is true that I have beaten you. But there is another alternative other then death."

Diablo raised his head towards him in question.

"Serve me." Squall said evenly. "You have power. Enormous power that could be of valuable service to those who chose to do good. Serve me and together we can make peace for this world."

Diablo sneered. "You sicken me with this talk of peace mortal! But you are brave. And I have seen the courage and selflessness in your comrades as well. I find that to be very admirable. I accept your offer Knight. I will be your Guardian when you are in need of one. Simply call upon me and I shall be there to vanquish any enemy that you would have me defeat."

Squall nodded his head slowly. Diablo's form wavered then transformed into mist. Squall gasped slightly as the mist engulfed his body and sank into him. He let out a small sigh then fell to his knees, finally allowing exhaustion to take over him.

Quistis looked on towards him as he lay there on his knees.

"Squall!" She said, quietly watching him. She wanted to rise up and embrace him yet she couldn't move. All she could do was watch as her hero rested from his intense battle. "It's over!" She whispered. "Rest now brave Knight!"

Suddenly the ground shook violently, snapping Squall out of his slight slumber.

"What now?" Quistis moaned as she looked towards the source of the commotion.

To their horror, the object that burst forth into the area was none other than the near destroyed form of the X-ATM092. It's sparks flashed violently as it approached the ground. Everything began to shake as it neared the small pillar at the center of the room, totally ignoring the rest of them.

'What's it doing?' Quistis pondered. Then her eyes snapped wide when she realized what the intensity of the shaking was coming from. The battle with Diablo has severely weakened the supports for the tower and now the whole structure was falling apart. "Squall!" She yelled as loud as she possibly could, which wasn't by much given her current condition. "You've got to get out of here!" She continued. "The entire structure is falling apart!"

Squall snapped to his feet, ignoring the fatigue as panic shot through him. He looked around wildly. Then, Suddenly the ground below him split open and he fell back from the force of it. He shakily got to his feet and saw that he was split off from Rinoa and Quistis. Each of them were on three different parts of the three way split. He saw the duel exits on either side of both woman but he couldn't spare the time to jump to both. He looked from one woman to the next. Quistis simply stared at him with lost eyes as the ground continued to shake. He then thrust his eyes towards the still comatose Rinoa. He couldn't decide what to do. They were both in no position to move. He had to decide who he was going to save. He shut his eyes tightly as his conflicted mind struggled with what decision he should make. He didn't want to have to decide. He didn't want to leave anyone

behind.

After what seemed like forever he made his choice. The truest and most costly choice he would ever make. He jumped to Rinoa.

Well, that ends the penultimate chapter of this Fanfic. Things will heat up. At least I hope so. The Dollet saga comes to a close in the final chapter to this fic. As always, Thanks for reading and please review! J

-Cordis

10. Default Chapter Title

> <meta name="Generator"> Disclaimer: All Final Fantasy 8 characters, places and things all belong to Squaresoft and other involved companies

Disclaimer: All Final Fantasy 8 characters, places and things all belong to Squaresoft and other involved companies. I own none of it. This fanfic is purely for the fun and enjoyment of others and myself. I make no money from it.

**

FINAL FANTASY/ ALTERED TALE

**

CHAPTER 10

—

'He left meâ€|'

—

Squall had long since grabbed Rinoa and exited the doorway, leaving Quistis behind but for some reason she still could not believe what had happened right in front of her eyes.

—

'After all we've been throughâ€| he left meâ€|'

—

Quistis couldn't hold it back anymore. In the past she had always prided herself on will power and her strong vitality to live. However, now as tears began to seep down her pale cheeks she began to realize how shallow those past claims were.

Drained beyond exhaustion, Quistis shook violently as she broke down into heart-wrenching sobs. It was irrelevant that such a feeling of dread came upon her in the face of death. She couldn't hide her emotions any longer. The fighting had drained her physical energy. The summoning sapped her mental reserves. And now, Squall's rejection destroyed what little remained of her spirit.

All around her, the ground began shaking apart and huge pieces of rock came pummeling down as the ceiling too, gave way. However, it didn't matter anymore. To Quistis life had ended for her, the very moment Squall made his decision to leave her behind. Too many emotions washed over her now. Of all the times in her life, this was the first time she had ever felt truly alone.

Unfortunately, she was not alone. The X-ATM092 slowly advanced towards her. Its circuitry sparked heavily and huge parts of metal hung loosely from its base yet it still endured. It crept menacingly as it neared closer and closer towards her. Loud, unnerving noises could be heard as it dragged its inactive back legs forward striving to reach its objective.

Quistis saw the monster approaching. She simply looked up towards it with lost eyes. _'Is this my end?' _She wondered. _'Am I truly going to finally be free of the tortures of this world?'_ She continued to stare as fear of the unknown seeped into her heart. So many mixed emotions washed over her at that one moment and then it happened. Whether by a cruel twist of fate or an incredibly stroke of luck she could not tell. However there was no denying it. Hanging limply, atop the beast of death was none other then Seifer Almasy.

Seifer felt his life force ebbing. He felt every last bit of pain. He knew what awaited him soon. However the greatest pain of all was the knowledge fate had mercilessly bestowed upon him before sending him into the next world. He had failed. All would be lost because of his failure. His weakness. Seifer hated this feeling. Of all the dishonor done to him, this was the worst. Yet, none the less, no matter how hard he tried, he could do nothing to prevent what was to come. He couldn't move even if he wanted to. Blood seeped freely from his lips as he laboriously sucked in and out for each small breath. He felt his essence pumping out of him with each heartbeat. His left arm could not move at all. He was finished. Utterly and completely undone by his opponent. At least he had the solace in knowing he had fought the hard fight. Yet he had lost. He failed miserably due to his weakness. That was something he could not bear and hoped that he would pass soon so that these visions of defeat with cease to haunt him.

He faintly heard the rumble of concrete as the floors gave way under him. He felt his body shift as the X-ATM092 leaned at a slight angle as it tried to keep its balance. He didn't care about the world around him anymore. All he wanted was sleep now, a peaceful, heavenly sleep. He finally began to close his eyes when a faint glimmer caught his attention. With the little bit of energy he had, he painstakingly raised his head. His eyes came to rest of the defeated form of Quistis Trepe.

—

_ 'Ah this is a cruel fate indeed.' _ He thought to himself. _ 'In my last moments of shame, she gets to gloat over my death.' _ Seifer looked towards her once more to confirm his suspicions but what he saw instead totally baffled him. His eyes slightly widened at that one single look in her eyes. His heart flooded with all kinds of different emotions as he regarded her. No longer was she the invincible Quistis Trepe. Gone was the bossy Battalion Leader he had

grown to despise. All of that was completely lost on the face of this figure in distress and all that remained was a woman. A lonely, shattered woman who had lost everything. At that last moment, Seifer understood the one indescribable emotion he saw in her. She was waiting to die. She had nothing left to give to the world and was waiting to die by the blades of this horrendous machine.

The machine ebbed closer towards the Arckon, determined to reach its objective. Suddenly something snapped in Seifer. The pure innocence of this woman before him captivated his senses and urged him forth. He would not let this woman die. No matter how tired he was or how much of a failure he had become. He would not let the light of this woman die needlessly. He would not let her give up. Roaring like a volcano bursting free from its prison, Seifer tapped into the last reserves of energy he never knew he had and flung his left arm forth towards Quistis limp form.

"Barrier!" He seethed. His vision became more bleary. He could feel his essence leaving him. He viciously snapped his eyes wide. _'I'm not done yet.'_ He raised himself up to his knees, causing more blood to flow freely from his open wounds. Seifer knew he was dying but it didn't matter. This was his last chance at redemption. He would not fail. For the sake of the vulnerable woman who had touched his heart, he would not let darkness befall this world. He raised his sword high as the ground began to crumble even further.

"GHRRRRRRAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGHHHHHHH!!!" He wailed as he tapped into the very last reserves of the raging volcano within his soul and slammed his sword hard into the Septer once more. The crystal shattered and suddenly darkness snatched him.

Quistis mind reeled. Everything had happened as if in slow motion. Only one word graced her shocked limps as she tried to get a hold of the situation.

"â€|Seifer?"

The first thing she knew, he was lying dead on the top of the X-ATM092. She couldn't understand why he would even be here. His mission was to stand guard while they infiltrated the tower. Had something gone wrong? Then suddenly their eyes locked. She saw a single tear escape his dying eyes as he drifted into nothingness. At that moment, Quistis felt a deep well of sympathy for the man. She had never known him to show such emotion ever in his life. The very fact that he was expressing himself now, at the brink of his own death was too much for her to bear. She started to reach out to him in sympathy but then suddenly the unexpected happened.

She felt a tremendous force push her back. As she scrambled to collect herself, here eyes widened in shock when she saw the dying man rise up from the brink of death roaring like one who's will power overruled his very own body. She watched in awe as the man swiftly drove his sword down into the machine's core. Immediately following, an explosion erupted. Fear overruled shock as she called out his name. However it was too late. After striking the monster, the man was swallowed up in an explosion that completely engulfed him. Smoke flared up around him and the machine slowly fell to its end.

Explosions reverberated off of its hull causing internal organs to fry until the machine finally burst into a ball of fire and chaos.

At that moment, the final floor supports gave in and Quistis felt herself falling. She didn't care anymore. In the blazing fires of hell, one man had stood up. One man had showed that in her last moments she was not aloneâ€|

"Wait for me Seiferâ€|" She whispered into the darkness.

Squall sped through the empty corridors of the tower as fast as he could. He felt the explosions resounding dangerously close to him. He sped faster, however his mind was in a completely opposite direction. _'I left her behindâ€|'_

The thought continued to plague him as he rushed further down the corridors. Never before had he ever had to make such a cruel decision and now he felt dirty. He felt shameful in a way that no water could ever wash away the stains that were engraved into his very heart. He held back his grief and turned it into energy. He charged faster down the tower stairs. Suddenly a huge burst of flames shot directly behind him. He spun into the air and he held Rinoa close, shielding her with his own body. It was all he could do. After all, it was the reason he had abandoned Quistis over Rinoa.

In accordance to the Knights code, if you promise someone safe passage, you must strive to do whatever it takes to ensure that promise. Squall had made the ultimate sacrifice in following that code. Yet what else could he do? The Knighthood was his life. If he couldn't rely on the code then what else was there? Nothing was left for him in this world but the code. If he couldn't live by it then he was nothing.

All of this entered his mind as he continued to stumble down the tower stairs. Another explosion went off and sent him soaring through the air. He noticed that the momentum of the blast was carrying him out towards one of the tower's lookout posts. Squall Quickly made for the window and Jumped out. At the last moment, another explosion shook the passageway, increasing the momentum of his decent. Swiftly, He and Rinoa descended towards the grassy plains below. He only had one chance left.

"Float!" He grumbled then he crashed into the ground. The spell had worked at the last instance. The landing was rough but they were still in considerably good shape. Rinoa stirred in his arms.

"Whereâ€| where am I?" She asked dazedly as she scanned her surroundings.

Squall did not answer. He simply looked back towards the crumbling tower and the One single life he left behind.

"â€|Are you ok?" Rinoa asked quietly. She had noticed Quistis wasn't around and figured out what he was worrying about.

"I'm sorry." She said silently.

Squall lowered his head. The blast had taken a lot out of him. And he was still shooting on overdrive from his earlier exertions. Rinoa looked at him with sympathy. She didn't know what had happened back there but she saw how bad it affected the Knight. Thus she said nothing and quietly hugged him. He absently accepted the huge, too overcome with emotions. For once in his life, he could not suppress his feelings of grief. He needed someone to comfort him then and Rinoa was there for him. Slowly, as Squall's mind drifted off into uneasy sleep, one sentence remained on his mind constantly taunting his very core. _'I left her behindâ€|'_

**

THE END?

** ** __** __

**Author's Note:** Well I accomplished the unexpected! I finished the 10 chapter fic I had set out to accomplish. It was great fun being able to write these 10 chapters. I really enjoyed writing many of the scenes especially in the last chapters. I know what many of you may be thinking. "That's it?" And the answer to that question is yes. However, I'm planning on writing another Saga to this Series in continuation to this story. I'm sorry I neglected to mention this before but the Saga heading for these ten chapters has basically been "The Dollet Mission." I know I left this fic off with a really bad ending and all that but I guess I'm just setting the stage for the new adventures awaiting Squall and Rinoa as they make their journey forth into new lands. Well, enough with the babbling I guess. I would really appreciate feedback on what you all thought. Suggestions for the next Saga would be much appreciated as well. Also I would like to take this time out to personally thank All of you who read my fanfic! And a super big Thank you to the following people.

- * AlasAvalon
- * Emeralda
- * Laguna
- * Critic
- * Kakkarot
- * Whatever
- * (no name)
- * and B. Braswell

I'd like to thank you all for your reviews. Your reviews helped give me the inspiration to go on and continue writing this fic. Thank you very much from the bottom of my heart!

So without further adieu, As always, thanks for reading and please review! J I'll be seeing ya!

-Cordis

End
file.